

THE



TIMES

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Which diets really work? The expert verdict

INSIDE
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Beckhams v
the Peltzes
I feel sorry
for Brooklyn

Power sites with meters fitted backwards 'cost us £100m a year'

Juliet Samuel

Electricity users could be paying up to £100 million a year in extra costs to operate Britain's national grid because hundreds of power installations have their meters fitted backwards.

The "power flow metering polarity issue", detailed in policy documents written by the state-owned National

Energy System Operator (Neso), means hundreds of meters are telling the grid operator they are consuming power when they are actually generating it, or vice versa. Neso documents said this made it harder to operate the grid within safe limits, and could add £100 million a year to its costs.

The grid control room is responsible for ensuring power supply and demand

are in balance at all times, which is critical to avoid blackouts. But whistle-blowers told The Times they were "flying blind" because of poor data.

The metering issue affects 416 offshore installations across up to 45 sites, all of which are likely to relate to offshore wind farms, according to an expert. There are also backwards meters in a further 402 unidentified installations

onshore. Neso has put the cost of fixing the issue at up to £44 million.

Andrew Larkins, an independent energy consultant who has advised Neso, suggested that the government may be putting more emphasis on green electricity targets rather than fixing the metering issue, adding: "Consumers ... appear not to be given a high priority."

A spokesman for Neso said: "This is

an operational metering data-quality issue, not a system security issue." He added the figures cited "should not be presented as actual consumer costs".

Ofgem said that it was working "to implement a more enduring solution". A spokesman for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero said: "We are reversing decades of underinvestment to upgrade and build out the grid."



TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND

Howzat for a hotspot

The effect of a scorching summer is seen at Bamville cricket club in Harpenden, Hertfordshire. The NHS is under pressure and several hospitals declared critical incidents

Britons shun sun to chill out on holiday

Jessica Newman

British holidaymakers are swapping Santorini for Scotland and Scandinavia as sweltering summer temperatures drive a surge in so-called "coolcations".

Temperatures in parts of England rose as high as 35C last week but north of the border there were spells of rain and highs in the mid-20s, a tempting prospect for those tired of the heatwave.

In the past three months, searches are up by 420 per cent for "coolcations" and 300 per cent for "escape the heat", according to Awaze, which owns Hoseasons and cottages.com. It said that Yorkshire and the northwest were also attracting more interest.

Travel Counsellors, a Manchester-based holiday firm, said that trips to northern Europe, particularly Norway, were up by about 25 per cent on last year, while the hospitality group Hyatt said bookings for Sweden had more than doubled over the past three years. Heatwave reports, page 4

Toll of schooling 'straitjacket'

Education secretary says 'one-size-fits-all' academic approach led to a million youngsters not being in training or work

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Forcing schools to prioritise academic learning has directly led to a million young people not in formal study, training or work, the new education secretary claimed today, as she signalled plans for big changes in the curriculum.

In an article for The Times, Lucy Powell said schools were stuck in a "straitjacket" of being forced to prioritise only academic subjects such as English, science and history, which had led to millions of children being branded a "failure again and again".

She said she intended to take a "fresh look at what we are teaching our children and whether we are equipping them for their lives ahead" as part of a

drive to undo the education reforms of Michael Gove, now Lord Gove. The government is considering changes to the curriculum, proposed as part of a review by Professor Becky Francis.

The Francis report largely left Gove's reforms unchanged but recommended that teenagers take fewer GCSE exams because of fears they are overly stressed and are being taught to the test rather than understanding the subject. Powell is understood to want to go further in allowing pupils to concentrate on more technical subjects at an earlier age.

Powell wrote: "We can no longer ignore that too many [children] get left behind or are turned off by an education system that's become too single-minded. Nor can we ignore the

modern economy, or societal demands to take a fresh look at what we are teaching our children and whether we are equipping them for their lives ahead.

"The one-size-fits-all approach simply doesn't suit all children. For some it's become a straitjacket. A straitjacket that has left too many being branded a failure — again and again — instead of being able to realise their potential."

Powell said her changes were not an "attack on ambition", adding that the reforms would raise standards across the board. But they are likely to prove controversial among parts of the educational establishment that credit Gove for improving school standards.

England has risen up the international league tables in maths per-

formance among 15-year-olds from 27th place in 2009 to 11th in 2023. In science, England rose from 16th to 13th. Supporters of Gove's reforms say similar improvements have not been seen in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, which have devolved education systems.

Katharine Birbalsingh, the headmistress of Michaela Community School in Wembley and a prominent critic of Labour's reforms, accused ministers of lowering expectations. "The biggest lie we tell in education is that things are 'too academic'," she said, arguing that pupils needed to score only approximately 20 per cent to achieve a pass in GCSE maths. She added: "Thirty per cent of kids don't manage this. How is this 'too academic'? Labour-supporting

teachers are crying out against Andy Burnham and Lucy Powell's attack on academic standards. Labour needs to listen to them."

Baroness Spielman, the former head of Ofsted and a Conservative peer, said Labour risked creating a false choice between academic and technical education. She said that the European countries most admired for their vocational systems "don't give up on the academic side" as pupils continue to study subjects including science, history and foreign languages until the age of 18.

"There is a simple, binary idea that once you hit 14, a bit of English and maths and technical [knowledge] is all that most people should be doing, and I Continued on page 2

News

Today's highlights

- 7am Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary
 7.45am Chris Philp, the shadow home secretary
 12.30pm Matthew Foldi, editor-in-chief of the Washington Reporter, on why so many young Americans think Richard Nixon was cool
 1.20pm Kim McGuinness, right, mayor of the north east
 2.05pm The actor Ross Kemp on the National Conversation campaign



TIMESRadio



TODAY'S EDITION

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Is there a succession drama at the home of Louis Vuitton?



An investigation by Le Monde has portrayed the French luxury goods group LVMH as embroiled in a succession drama under its ageing "king" Bernard Arnault. Arnault appeared on X to post a rebuttal. What's really going on?

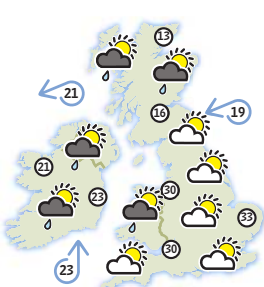
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THE WEATHER



Patchy cloud and rain in the north and west. Dry elsewhere with sunny spells. Full forecast, page 43

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Ministers' criminal records to remain secret, tribunal rules

George Greenwood
 Investigations Reporter

Voters have been denied the right to know whether any ministers declared past criminal convictions after a transparency tribunal upheld Whitehall attempts to keep vetting processes secret.

The first-tier information tribunal ruled last month that a Times request for the number of ministers in Sir Keir Starmer's government who had declared criminal records in their vetting procedure would not be permitted for data protection reasons.

The request was prompted by the resignation of Louise Haigh, who was forced to step down as transport secretary after it emerged that she had failed to publicly disclose a fraud conviction, to establish if any other sitting ministers had made similar declarations during their appointment vetting.

Haigh has since been reappointed by Starmer's successor, Andy Burnham, as chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The tribunal recognised that this public interest was substantial given

"the request concerns standards in public life and the integrity of those holding ministerial office", and that "ministers exercise significant public power and there is a legitimate public interest in scrutiny of systems intended to ensure their suitability for office".

However, it found that it "should not be disclosed because information sought constitutes criminal offence data. Parliament has afforded such information enhanced protection".

The tribunal accepted that even disclosing if no ministers had declared a criminal record, that this could constitute the unlawful disclosure of "criminal offence data" about every current member of the cabinet.

It accepted evidence from Simon Madden, the director of the propriety and ethics team at the Cabinet Office, that disclosure could have an effect as "the process depends in part upon candid disclosures made in circumstances where confidentiality is expected".

The decision was not unanimous. A dissenting minority on the panel argued that the request sought infor-

mation about "disclosure behaviour" within the appointments process, rather than the criminal convictions themselves, and that this candour should rightly be subject to democratic scrutiny.

The member wrote: "Prospective ministers are required to exercise their own judgment as to what information ought properly to be disclosed. The process depends upon candour. There is no statutory obligation to disclose particular matters and no requirement that every potentially relevant issue be reported."

"The information sought concerns what individuals chose to disclose in response to a broad suitability inquiry. It does not concern the underlying question of whether any individual in fact has a criminal conviction."

The government refused to state the number of Burnham's ministers that had declared criminal convictions outside of freedom of information and declined to provide any comment on why it believed this was information that should not be publicly disclosed.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
Schooling 'straitjacket'

think that's fundamentally misconceived," she added.

In her article, Powell directly blamed Gove for the number of young people not in education, training or work, saying they had been let down by his reforms. "One million. That's how many young people from the education system Michael Gove presided over are now left outside education, not in employment and not in training," she wrote. "That's not a coincidence — it's a consequence. It's his legacy."

She added: "Children from poorer backgrounds with stubborn and entrenched disadvantage and those

with special educational needs have been particularly let down. So too have those whose talents and skills lie beyond academia, in creative subjects, technical or skilled work or more practical application."

Powell was backed by Dame Tamara Finkelstein, the chief executive of the Royal Academy of Engineering, who welcomed the government's greater emphasis on technical education, saying it was "vital" to help employers develop the skilled workforce they needed.

Pepe Di'lasio, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said stronger links between education, skills and local jobs "could be a positive step towards reducing the staggering number

of young people not currently learning or earning".

Gove accused ministers of showing a "poverty of ambition" and warned that the reforms risked undoing years of progress in raising standards. He said there was "a natural tendency" for people to think there was a "limitation on the number of students who can enjoy or benefit from an academic curriculum to the age of 16".

He added: "That is exhibiting a poverty of ambition, because the best-performing schools ... succeed in drawing students from disadvantaged homes and ... yet they are able to ensure that children can succeed."

Technical and academic education go hand in hand, leading article, page 21

Gove's legacy is a million left behind

Lucy Powell
Comment

One million. That's how many young people from the education system Michael Gove presided over are now left outside education, not in employment and not in training. That's not a coincidence — it's a consequence. It's his legacy.

Getting all those young people back on the road to success is my priority. We won't get there by creating false straw-man arguments, but by recognising what we've done well, what's gone wrong and how we need to put it right.

It's now been 30 years since Tony Blair named his three priorities: education, education, education. In that time we've seen huge strides in education. Standards have risen, literacy and numeracy are hugely improved and a large majority of state schools are good or outstanding. But we can no longer ignore that too many get left behind or are turned off by an education system that's become too single-minded. Nor can we ignore the modern economy, or societal demands to take a fresh look at what we are teaching our children and whether we are equipping them for their lives ahead.

Children from poorer backgrounds with stubborn and

entrenched disadvantage and those with special educational needs have been particularly let down. So too have those whose talents and skills lie beyond academia, in creative subjects, technical or skilled work or more practical application.

The one-size-fits-all approach simply doesn't suit all children. For some it's become a straitjacket. A straitjacket that has left too many being branded a failure — again and again — instead of being able to realise their potential. Education should be a passport. A passport into work, into life, on to the next stage. As things stand, too many aren't given one.

Fixing this requires us to be bold. It requires us to keep raising the standards of everything we do across academic, technical and creative routes, alongside our hard-working teachers. At the same time, we must expand the ambition of education so that it works for every child. This means giving more children a passport to success wherever their passions lie, and, yes, creating high-quality vocational options.

Sir Hamid Patel, whose schools Gove rightly praises, agrees. He co-chaired the independent inquiry into white working-class educational outcomes with Baroness Morris of Yardley. They called for stronger links between schools, colleges, employers and communities so that high standards are matched by high-quality pathways into further study,

training and employment. That vision is not, and never has been, an attack on the ambition shown by schools like Patel's. It is an attack on a system that lets so many others fall through the cracks. I'm not lowering ambition for any child. Rather, I'm extending it. Whether that's a place at a top university or a quality apprenticeship.

The idea that academic and technical education are rivals competing for status belongs in the past. It's the same kind of tired, snobbish thinking that says the academic route is for clever children and the technical route is for the rest.

Britain's future relies on finally recognising that the next generation needs high levels of knowledge, creativity, adaptability and technical expertise, all at the same time.

It also involves recognising that not all children are the same. But the talents and know-how of young people today — who are far better at understanding the technology and opportunities we are all grappling with — have never been more needed.

I won't ever compromise on rigour and high expectations. That's not the same as being uncompromising in the face of the evidence and unbending in a fast-changing world. I fear that's exactly what Michael Gove is doing.

Lucy Powell is the education secretary



John Gregson, left, on a minesweeper and, below, in his sailor's uniform in 1940. After the war he starred in hits such as the 1953 comedy *Genevieve*, which launched Gregson, top right, as a star

Ealing star's swashbuckling role: a 'pirate' for Churchill

A new book tells how John Gregson's wartime service in a rag-tag fleet inspired his acting, Kate Mansey writes

With what *The Times* described as "his easy charm and dark good looks", it's no surprise John Gregson became one of Britain's biggest film stars, with roles in *Whisky Galore*, *Genevieve* and *Above Us the Waves*.

But what may come as a surprise to his legion of fans is the dramatic role that Gregson, who died in 1975, played as one of Winston Churchill's "pirates" during the Second World War.

A new book has uncovered Gregson's hitherto unpublished letters and diaries, which show how his experience on minesweepers in the Royal Navy inspired his career as a film star.

Born into a Catholic family as the youngest of six children in 1919, Gregson lived just off Penny Lane in Liverpool and developed a love for amateur dramatics. When war broke out, he joined the Navy and found himself piloting the *Kerryado*, an armed, 250-ton minesweeping-transporter.

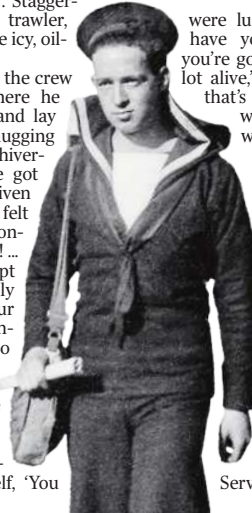
The work was dangerous and in

March 1941 the *Kerryado* hit a German mine in the Channel.

Gregson was thrown up into the air. He later wrote to his family that he was "too stunned to be afraid. And the water — torrents of water, swirling and seething all around me." He crashed back on to the deck and glanced down to see his knee "was not hurting much but it looked a strange shape". Staggering along the listing trawler, Gregson jumped into the icy, oil-covered water.

He was hauled out by the crew of another trawler, where he "just fell on the deck and lay there for a while just hugging the planks! We were all shivering now, but when we got down below we were given dry clothes and rum and felt a lot better. Oh what wonderful fellows they were! ... One of their crew leapt into the water, fully dressed, to save one of our boys who was just beginning to weaken. We felt so grateful to them."

The experience made him realise that he wanted to turn to acting after the war. "While I was in hospital recovering, I thought to myself, 'You



were lucky. If that one didn't have your number on, then you're going to get through this lot alive," he wrote, later. "And that's when I decided that I would like to act when the war was over."

Gregson's story features in *Churchill's Pirates: The Seafaring Heroes Who Helped Win WWII*, which charts the story of a seafaring fleet initially sailed by former deep-sea fishermen, whose formation was overseen by Churchill. Nicknamed "Churchill's Pirates" on account of their rag-tag appearance, the group was officially known as the Royal Navy Patrol Service (RNPS) and was

bolstered with volunteer recruits such as Gregson. Will Iredale, the author and historian, discovered Gregson's wartime letters, diaries and pictures. There was also a private biography that had been written by Gregson's son.

Iredale said: "As a leading man of the silver screen for many years starring in some of the biggest films of the era, John Gregson will be a familiar face to millions of people. But as these extraordinary wartime letters now reveal, perhaps his most important and courageous role of all was serving as one of Churchill's Pirates."

Speaking about the significance of the RNPS, Iredale added: "From an initial force of just 4,000, it grew to a vast fleet over 70,000 strong, serving in over 6,000 converted fishing trawlers, drifters and other little ships, which saw action from the first day of the war until the last, sweeping mines, hunting U-boats and escorting ships in all theatres around the world. More than 3,000

men were killed and one in five ships sunk — more than any other section of the Royal Navy."

After the war, Gregson went on to act during a boom-time for British cinema. He worked for Ealing studios, making films including *Scott of the Antarctic* and *The Tiffield Thunderbolt*.

His greatest success came in 1953 when he appeared in *Genevieve*, a comedy about a car rally from London to Brighton. The film launched Gregson as a film star. By the late 1950s he had made 23 films in ten years.

Minesweeping crews were praised by Churchill in *The Gathering Storm*, the first volume of his book, *The Second World War*. The wartime leader wrote: "Their toils and tireless coverage were our salvation. The sea traffic on which we depended for our existence proceeded without interruption."

Churchill's Pirates: The Seafaring Heroes Who Helped Win WWII is published on Thursday by Penguin.



Sculpture of Victorian poisoning suspect saved for the nation

Anna Dowell

A childhood sculpture of the woman at the heart of a Victorian poisoning mystery has been barred from export and bought for the National Trust to stand in her childhood home.

Florence Campbell became infamous for the unsolved murder of her second husband, Charles Bravo, which armchair detectives including Agatha Christie have pondered since 1876.

The eldest daughter of an Australian businessman, Campbell grew up in the Buscot Park, Oxfordshire. Aged 19 she married Alexander Ricardo, a cavalry officer and violent alcoholic.

In 1870, while seeking respite in Malvern, Worcestershire, she was treated by James Gully, a doctor 37 years her

senior who used a "water cure" to treat Charles Dickens, Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Florence Nightingale. As Gully would later admit in court, "she was alone a great deal" and they began an affair. In 1871, after she and her husband had formally separated, Ricardo died, leaving Campbell an inheritance. Cast out by her family, she continued her clandestine relationship with Gully.

To rescue her reputation, in 1875 she married Bravo, a barrister, and they moved to Balham, south London. He was furious to learn that under the new Married Women's Property Act he did not own Campbell's inherited fortune.

Four months later, he died suddenly, after dinner with his wife and her housekeeper, Jane Cox, from poisoning by the metal antimony. In court Cox

claimed he said to her: "I have taken poison, don't tell Florence."

At an inquest a week later, a jury returned an open verdict, though the coroner concluded he had probably committed suicide.

His family demanded a second inquest and Campbell's affair with Gully was "dragged before the public". *The Times* reported. The couple's dis-

missed coachman, who used antimony to worm horses, became a suspect, as did the meek housekeeper and Campbell herself, though she was never indicted.

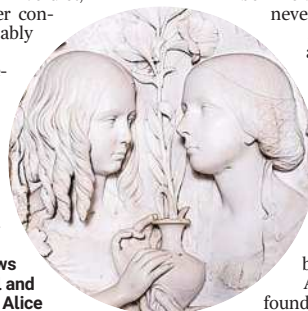
A more likely suspect, according to Christie, was Gully. Christie wrote in *The Sunday Times* in 1968 that "he was the only person who had an overwhelming motive" and even suspected Gully "had a hand" in the death of Campbell's first husband.

A second inquest jury found that Bravo had been

"wilfully murdered" but could not name his poisoner. Campbell moved to Southsea, Hampshire, where she drank herself to death aged 33.

Baron Henri Joseph Francois de Triqueti's 1857 sculpture of Campbell aged 12 and her sister Alice aged 9 had been sold to an overseas buyer before its export was barred last year. The Faringdon Collection Trust and a descendant of Alice Campbell has now bought the sculpture and plinth for £280,000 to stand in Buscot Park.

James Henderson, great-grandson of the first Baron Faringdon, said: "I feel like we've brought Florence and Alice home. Florence is buried in the Buscot churchyard with a plain slab and just her initials. This carving is from a happier time."



The sculpture shows Florence Campbell and her younger sister, Alice

British firefighter survives Greek crash

Two aerial firefighters died after a pair of helicopters collided while battling a huge blaze northwest of Athens that has destroyed more than 100 homes.

The crash happened near Psatha, 40 miles from the Greek capital, the country's fire and rescue service said.

A Greek and a Dane were killed on one aircraft while a Briton and a Greek on the other helicopter survived after it landed safely, the authorities said.

Video posted online appears to show two helicopters crossing paths at low altitude. The main rotor of the lower helicopter strikes the underside of the higher aircraft and it crashes in flames. The second helicopter then dumps its load of water and flies away. Greek officials confirmed the deaths after a search of the area.

The aircraft were fighting blazes close to the coastal resort of Porto Germeno on



Fires northwest of Athens, where two helicopters collided, top, have exceeded "all human planning", the Greek prime minister said

the Gulf of Corinth. The fire spread south and reached the settlement of Veniza and a military firing range, igniting unexploded ordnance. Firefighters focused on preventing the fire from advancing towards the coastal town of Megara, which has a population of about 30,000. More than



500 firefighters were trying to contain the blaze. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the prime minister, said: "There are moments when the force of nature and the intensity of weather conditions exceed all human planning and every operational capability." Emergency alerts and

evacuation orders were issued for settlements in the west of the region of Attica. Evacuations were also taking place on the Ionian island of Kefalonia, where more than 750,000 tourists visit each year. A fire there broke out in the Pastra area, on the south of the island.

Deadly heatwaves putting NHS under same pressure as winter

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

The NHS is struggling to cope with record demand caused by summer heatwaves, and some hospitals have cancelled operations because they cannot cope with high temperatures.

Health officials believe that nearly 3,000 patients have died this summer as a result of complications such as heart attacks and strokes linked to the extreme weather.

The NHS said that the summer was putting it "under just as much pressure as winter". Data showed that A&E units were busier in June than in any winter month on record, and that 999 calls and GP appointments had risen by 10 per cent compared with last summer.

Several hospitals declared critical incidents because ageing NHS buildings were "not equipped to cope", meaning MRI scans, blood tests and surgery were delayed. Very few GP surgeries or hospital wards have air conditioning,

which is prioritised for critical spaces such as operating theatres.

An estimated 2,877 excess deaths were caused by heatwaves in May and June, according to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

Family doctors are reporting record demand due to patients needing advice for heat-related illnesses or worsening conditions. There were 34.9 million GP appointments in June, up from 31.4 million in the same month last year.

Dr Amanda Doyle, national director for primary care at NHS England, said: "Figures show GP teams have dealt with more appointments, calls and on-line requests than any June on record, as the country dealt with back-to-back heatwaves. Extreme heat can be dangerous, particularly to children, older people and those with existing concerns like heart conditions who are more prone to becoming unwell."

In June, when a daily temperature record of 38C was set, an average of

81,264 people attended A&E every day, making it the busiest month on record.

The NHS national medical director, Professor Frankie Swords, said: "Summer is now putting the NHS under just as much pressure as winter, with staff facing an onslaught of demand."

In Norfolk hundreds of patients had vital scans cancelled after MRI equipment broke down in the heat.

Tim Lane, president of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, said: "In extreme heat, operating theatres become harder to maintain safely with excessive temperatures impacting upon essential equipment. Operations can be delayed or cancelled."

"In one hospital, excessive humidity triggered a fire alarm, forcing operations to be cancelled. While surgical teams can leave the operating theatre after a long procedure, patients return to sweltering wards. With the expectation that summers will continue to get hotter, the solution is long overdue."

Dr Munro Stewart, vice-president of the Royal College of General Practitioners, said: "Many practices are not equipped to cope with extreme heat, and this is only set to get worse in the future when all indications suggest heatwaves will become more common." Stewart said investment in GP sites was essential.

With more hot weather expected this month, the UKHSA said it "is likely that 2026 could see the highest number of heat-associated deaths on record".

Yvette Cooper, the health secretary, said: "My thoughts are with all those who have lost loved ones as a result of the long and intense heatwaves in recent months."

● Britain could face food shortages if drought conditions continue, the National Farmers Union has warned. Its president, Tom Bradshaw, said yields of wheat and oats were "very, very poor" and vegetable producers were running low on water.

Transition to rewilding 'may increase risk of wildfires'

Kaya Burgess Science Correspondent

Rewilding projects can sometimes see a "spike" in wildfire risk during their transition periods that may require human access to be banned, an environmental expert has warned.

There has been debate over whether rewilding projects to restore forests or heathland around Britain may have contributed to the severity and spread of wildfires during recent heatwaves by changing the abundance and nature of

plants, such as grasses and shrubs, that can serve as fuel for the blazes.

The RSPB refuted suggestions that its management of the land at its Minsmere reserve, where the Suffolk wildfires began, may have contributed to the severity of the blazes, noting the reserve had been "carefully and extensively managed for the past 79 years".

An RSPB spokesman said it "takes the risk of wildfire exceptionally seriously across all our reserves", including through cutting firebreaks and restor-

ing wetlands. He added: "We have long established processes in place to help prevent fires and respond rapidly when they occur but it's important to remember this summer's wildfires have been unprecedented in their scale."

Thomas Smith, an associate professor of environmental geography at the London School of Economics, said the key to rewilding schemes lies in how carefully the transition is managed. He noted: "If you've got a very shrubby landscape [and] long grasses, you've got

an abundance of fuel that is dry for a long period of the year, both in the spring but also in the summer, if we've got heatwaves." Smith added that "the probability of ignition goes down if you remove people from the landscape".

However, David Symons, from the WSP engineering firm's Future Ready programme, said: "You could make a perfectly plausible case that rewilding actually reduces fire risk."

Wildfires suggest rewilding needs a rethink, Libby Purves, page 19

Quintagram® No 2636

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Implicit, assumed (5)

2 Central part (6)

3 Taxonomic group above genus (6)

4 Scoreless over in cricket (6)

5 Set of people living together (9)

A	A	D	D	D	D	E
E	E	F	G	H	H	I
I	I	L	L	L	M	M
N	N	O	O	S	U	V

Solutions see T2 MindGames p14
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p15

Edwards shares poem

The disgraced former BBC newsreader Huw Edwards has reflected on shame as an "accursed son" in what he says is his first poem. The work, originally in Welsh, is a tribute to his late father written for the National Eisteddfod. Edwards, 64, shared it on the blogging platform Substack, saying: "I hope readers find it illuminating."

Royal Cadillac for sale

A bespoke Cadillac convertible that was built to transport Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip on their 1951 tour of Canada will go on sale. The black automatic vehicle is being offered with no reserve price and is expected to fetch over £100,000, said Barrett-Jackson of Las Vegas, which will offer the classic car at auction from September 10 to 12.



The royal tour in Winnipeg in 1951

Seaweed needs a name

A newly identified seaweed species with pink "zebra" stripes needs a common name, with public suggestions sought by the botanist who first found a fragment off the Cornish coast 40 years ago. Known as *ceramium ruessianum*, it was discovered by Professor Christine Maggs, whose findings will be published in the journal Phycologia.

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Plagiarism row professor faces scrutiny over pig's head claim

Crystal Jones

A Cambridge academic at the centre of a plagiarism row is facing further scrutiny over claims that police investigated a pig's head he said was sent to his parents.

Jason Arday was fêted as the youngest ever black professor at the university, but has become embroiled in a plagiarism scandal after he was alleged to have used the work of other academics in his dissertation.

In an interview with The Times last week, he acknowledged errors in his work but denied he was "a liar".

He has now faced further scrutiny over claims he has made about his personal life, including the level of abuse he is alleged to have suffered. In an interview with The Guardian, published on Saturday, he claimed a severed pig's head was delivered to his parents' home in south London. He told the newspaper that police spoke to a local butcher as part of an investigation into the alleged incident. He said officers found that the butcher had sold a "whole hog" on the morning in question.

However, the Metropolitan Police told The Times they could find "no record of any allegation involving a pig's head and no record of any of the subsequent claims about officers visiting butchers". A spokesperson said: "As far as we can see our only involvement was receiving an allegation of online harassment involving a suspect in Cambridge. We passed the allegation to Cambridgeshire police."

Arday is understood to maintain his version of events and friends said he had recordings that would show he did speak to police about the pig's head. He has also faced questions over comments made in a televised seminar, in which he recalled taking part in what he described as "Seven Up". In an interview with the University of Bath race equality task force, Arday said: "I was part of a programme actually. It doesn't really exist any more but it was called

Seven Up at the time, and Seven Up is basically when they follow you over the duration of your life. So they follow you at kind of 7, 14, 21, and I was pulled out the project when I was 14."

Arday is understood to maintain that he was talking about an informal network of black mothers, which shared a name with the series produced by



The Met said they could find no record of Jason Arday's allegation

Granada Television and broadcast by ITV and the BBC from 1964.

A source close to Arday said: "This was a local community and parent-led initiative developed around the Ubuntu principle that 'it takes a village to raise a child' ... The reference to 'Seven Up' was used informally as a shorthand illustration of the concept."

The Good Law Project set up a petition in Arday's favour. It has been signed, among others, by Zack Polanski, the Green Party leader; Sonita Alleyne, the master of Jesus College, Cambridge; and Lord Woolley of Woodford, the principal of Homerton College, Cambridge.

Arday was approached for comment.

Afghan cleaner arrested over Briton found dead in suitcase

George Odling Athens, Iro Pappa

Greek police investigating the death of a British woman in Athens have arrested a 26-year-old Afghan said to have worked as a cleaner in the building where she was staying.

The body of Elisabeth-Jane Ross, 38, was found in a suitcase inside a derelict building on July 18.

Athens police said the man had been arrested for manslaughter and robbery, and detectives believe he used the victim's bank cards to withdraw thousands of euros.

He is thought to have put Ross's body in the case and dumped it in the abandoned building in Kypseli, a neighbourhood in Athens that is often frequented by homeless people, the force added.

"The 26-year-old [allegedly] used the victim's bank cards in the following days to withdraw money," a spokesperson said. "During searches carried out at his home, a replica pistol and a knife were found and confiscated."

Police sources said the man claimed to have found Ross already dead, and he admitted he took her bank card and dumped the body to cover his tracks.

But locals living in the apartment block where Ross was staying said officers who questioned them on Thursday asked if they had heard screams coming from her flat, located a ten-minute walk from where her body was found.

George Kalliakmanis, of the Attica Police Officers' Union, said detectives were working on the theory that Ross was killed in the apartment. "[The suspect] and his wife worked as the cleaners of the building where Elisabeth lived," he told The Times.

"He allegedly killed her, took her bank card and put her body in a suitcase or a box. He then transported it to the abandoned building using a trolley. Once there, he realised the suitcase he had used would likely contain his fingerprints, so he transferred the body into a second suitcase, trying to be more careful to avoid leaving prints. However, fingerprints were still found."

"After that, he left for Arachova [a mountain village in central Greece]. He also used her phone to send messages to her friends and acquaintances."

Ross's phone was used to send messages until her identity was made public on July 29. Her father, a lawyer from Edinburgh, told police he had been receiving messages from her phone until the day she was formally identified. Detectives believe the killer was using the device to cover their tracks.

One text, sent on July 15 to a Greek friend, read: "I need some time — I'm going to a Greek island." Other messages



Elisabeth-Jane Ross, 38, and the apartment block where she was staying in Athens. The Scot volunteered with organisations that helped refugees

sent to family members claimed that she "needed some time to herself" and that she "wanted to be alone for a while". A further post declaring her intention to travel to Turkey was made on her Facebook page on July 24, six days after her body was discovered, the Mail reported. Investigators said the phone,

which has not been found, was active in Athens until just before Ross was publicly identified last Wednesday.

The Scot had been travelling regularly to Greece, volunteering with NGOs and working with abused women and refugee centres. Among the groups she volunteered with was the One Heart

organisation in Athens, which provides medical support to refugees, particularly those from Iran and Afghanistan. Locals in the Kypseli area of the city, where her body was discovered, reported seeing a woman matching her description speaking to homeless people before her disappearance.

Ross stayed with Greek friends in the Keratsini district of Athens but told them she was visiting some American friends in Kypseli on July 15. However, a police source said no such friends had come forward. The Greek couple in Keratsini are not suspects and have provided useful information to police during questioning, sources confirmed.

Family members have paid tribute to Ross, who flew into Athens in late June. Her aunt, Anne Bangham, said: "It is horrific. She was such a beautiful, loving and kind young lady. She had not long arrived there to work."

Music festival cancelled after 23 hurt in stampede

Debbie White

More than 20 people were injured during a stampede at a music festival in London, forcing organisers to suddenly cancel the weekend event after a "major incident" was declared.

Some of those injured in the crush at Ghana Party in the Park were given CPR and three were taken to hospital. The crowd surged after a blaze broke out at the Copthall Playing Fields in Barnet, north London, shortly after 6pm on Saturday, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police said.

"A small fire near the entrance required the gates to be closed temporarily. A crowd built up and surged when the gates reopened," he added.

He said officers and organisers "responded quickly and formed a barrier" between the surging crowds and the injured trapped on the ground.

Police "gave initial medical care, including CPR, to those who had sustained injuries. They were joined by paramedics and firefighters as part of a co-ordinated response," he said.

"A total of 23 people received some form of assistance from the emergency services or the event medical team, with nine assessed by the London Ambulance Service. Three were taken to hospital where their condition was confirmed as non-life threatening."

Dozens of emergency vehicles, including air ambulances, attended.

One festivalgoer, Kieran Turnbull, 18, told The Sun: "We saw this stampede coming through the main entrance, where they do the bag searches everyone was pushing through. People were being carried out on stretchers. It became very, very chaotic." He said the event was "very poorly organised".

Barnet police posted on X that the event was "cancelled after an overcrowding issue at the entrance saw several people sustain non-life threatening injuries. Speculation about a stabbing is inaccurate."

In a public notice on social media, festival organisers attributed the "abrupt closure" due to an "unfortunate incident".

The decision to close the festival "was made solely on the grounds of health and safety," they said, adding: "We wish all those who sustained injuries a speedy recovery, and safe journey back home to everyone."

The festival is the biggest Ghanaian event outside of Ghana, attracting more than 8,000 visitors from the UK, Europe, United States, Canada and Ghana. The Times contacted the organisers for further comment.

News Politics

Burnham vows to be 'relentless'

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Andy Burnham said he would be "relentless" in reducing the number of small boat crossings, as figures showed that more than 2,000 people had arrived in the UK across the Channel since he became prime minister.

Home Office statistics showed 326 migrants arrived on Saturday in four boats, bringing the total to 2,057 since he took over from Sir Keir Starmer on July 20.

There were 1,962 crossings in the same period last year, but the total for the year so far is still significantly down on this time in 2025.

Yesterday, Burnham visited Dover's joint command room, the hub for monitoring small boat crossings, where officers from the National Crime Agency, Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the Border Security Command work to track movements across the strait using surveillance drones.

The government said that since the start of 2025, the number of National Crime Agency officers working to prevent organised immigration crime had more than doubled from 376 to almost 800.

Burnham insisted he was not "complacent" about the scale of the problem, pointing to "progress" that had been made under his predecessor. "It's why I am here," he said on a visit to Dover. "It's why I've come down on Sunday to see the team to listen to what they think needs to be done, what further can be done. So we're just going to be relentless. People want to see this issue addressed."

"I heard that on the doorsteps in Makerfield, but we also need to build a system that offers safe routes for people as well, because that also takes away the selling point of the gangs. So on every level we've got to cover this ... crucially increasing the enforcement activity."

Concerns about illegal migration have been highlighted by the arrival of tens of thousands of migrants who swam into the Spanish exclave of Ceuta on Thursday, prompting fears that some intend to ultimately arrive in the UK.

Burnham said that 98 per cent of the people who arrived in Ceuta had now been returned to Morocco, but acknowledged the crisis had highlighted a "broader issue about the Schengen area and our relationship with it".

The scenes in Ceuta were seized upon by Reform UK, who announced plans for the "largest military operation



Andy Burnham visited a coastguard centre in Dover yesterday, where he was shown a surveillance drone that could be used to track small boat crossings. French police, left, have said that they lack the power to intervene as migrants cross the Channel



EU talks after Ceuta chaos

European Union countries are set to hold emergency talks tomorrow to discuss a response to the rush of illegal migrants over the Spanish border at Ceuta last week.

Italy and Denmark put forward a proposal for a video conference attended by interior ministers. By yesterday evening, 22 of 27 EU member states had signed the letter.

"We cannot allow uncontrolled mass crossings, the instrumentalisation of migration or other hybrid threats to create the perception that illegal entry into the European Union is possible," the letter says.

On Friday, Rome temporarily reintroduced border checks for travellers arriving from Spain. Madrid criticised the decision highlighting that travellers from Ceuta to the Spanish mainland are already subject to extra controls.

Pope Leo XIV said that he was asking God "that solutions of peace, stability and justice may be found".

in the English Channel since World War Two" to stop small boat arrivals from France.

The party said it would send the Royal Navy into the Channel to intercept all migrant boats there and return them to France or Belgium under a plan called Operation Fortress.

The plan was in line with international law and would both halt small boat arrivals and act as a humanitarian response, Reform added. It said the situation in north Africa showed the "urgency" of its plan.

Zia Yusuf, the party's home affairs spokesman, said that Britain was "being invaded".

"Tory and Labour governments responded with a free ferry service and free hotels," he said. "Nigel Farage will order His Majesty's Royal Navy to ensure that not a single unauthorised vessel crossing the English Channel makes it to the shores of the United Kingdom. "Those who attempt it will be intercepted by our armed forces and returned to France."

Wednesday marked the busiest day for small boat crossings across the Channel so far this year, as 752 migrants arrived in the UK. The provisional total for the year so far is 14,526, 43 per cent lower than the number recorded by this time last year.

Shabana Mahmood, the home secretary, said: "I think the most important thing that people need to hear from their home secretary is that I'm doing whatever it takes to secure our border. And that is what I've been absolutely laser-light focused on from the moment I became the home secretary, taking all of the measures that I know are needed in order to secure our border."

Mahmood said the government's work to tackle small boat crossings was beginning to "bear fruit" although she acknowledged further reforms were still needed.

"It's why I'm pursuing immigration reform to address the pull factors that draw people into boats in the Channel," she said. "I want to change the calculus. I want them to change their mind about whether they get on the boat in the first place."

Although removals of illegal immigrants are up 41 per cent since Labour took power in 2024, totalling more than 70,000 deportations, Mahmood said the government "will go further" on this issue.

"I share the public's concern every time they see images of people crossing the Channel," she added.



Migrants who entered Ceuta wait for

Generational divide over how to pay for social care

Oliver Wright

The public are divided by age on how to pay the £18 billion cost of reforming social care in Britain.

YouGov polling for The Times has found that a majority of pensioners support an increase in income tax paid predominantly by people in work to fund the new scheme.

However, this is reversed when young people, aged between 18 and 24, were asked the same question. Instead they favoured a so-called death tax that would levy a charge on the estates of people when they die.

The findings highlight the difficulties likely to be faced by Andy Burnham as he tries to tackle an issue that successive prime ministers have failed to.

Revealing his plans last week he admitted there would be "difficult decisions" on funding but insisted he was determined to "get it right". He said a decision "would be put before the coun-

try at the right time and we will hopefully proceed with people's consent".

The polling found overwhelming support for Burnham's ambition to reform social care and end the model whereby people are required to fund their own care until they have assets left worth less than £23,250.

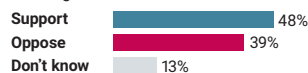
Just 5 per cent of voters said the current system for long-term care and how it is funded worked well compared with 70 per cent who said it worked badly. At the same time 23 per cent of voters put it in the top four issues facing the country, behind the NHS, cost of living and defence.

But on the question of how the new model should be funded there were clear divisions. Overall, 48 per cent of people favoured increasing income tax to fund free long-term care for everyone who needs it in old age, compared with 39 per cent who were opposed.

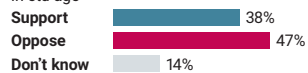
Increasing inheritance tax in order to fund free long-term care was backed by

Support or oppose?

Increasing income tax to fund free long-term care for everyone who needs it in old age



Increasing inheritance tax to fund free long-term care for everyone who needs it in old age



Source: YouGov. 2,063 adults, July 29-30, 2026

38 per cent and opposed by 47 per cent.

But these figures hid some significant variations according to age.

Some 61 per cent of pensioners backed funding the change through income tax, compared with just 40 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds. Likewise, 39

per cent of over-65s backed the so-called death tax model compared with 48 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds.

A third proposal requiring everyone to pay into a compulsory insurance scheme to fund any long-term care they may need in old age was backed by 44 per cent of the public and opposed by 38 per cent.

Burnham asked for a report on options to reform social care, to be compiled by Baroness Casey of Blackstock, to be brought forward by a year and suggested that he wanted to make changes to the system before the next election.

He invited the Conservative and Liberal Democrat leaders to hold talks on trying to build cross-party consensus, saying: "We're all going to have to give if we're going to get to a solution."

Separate polling by More in Common, found that 70 per cent of the public wanted social care costs to be funded by some kind of taxation, com-

pared with 21 per cent who said they should be paid for by individuals.

Luke Tryl, the company's UK director, said this suggested that the public were open to change. "Britain's social care crisis has bedevilled successive governments, while attempts at reform have become associated with electoral peril," he said.

"The good news for Burnham's social care push is that Britons want to see it prioritised and are willing, in principle, to have a conversation about the tax rises that might be needed ... and don't recoil from ideas such as an estates levy."

"That said, awareness of different models remains low, and people might be more reluctant to see their own taxes rise in the face of a forceful anti-tax rise campaign. The prime minister may have to spend political capital once the shape of the proposals is known to show they are fair."

We need councils to reopen care homes, Thunderer, page 18

in stopping Channel crossings

VIOLETA SANTOS MOURA, JACK TAYLOR/REUTERS; TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE



water provided by the Spanish military. Dozens have died in land and sea crossings from Morocco in the past few days

Smugglers take migrants to Spain, three to a jet ski

In the thick forests in the mountains of Ceuta, Moncef Daharchi ventures out from his hiding place into the car park of a viewpoint and, seeing that the coast is clear, gives a signal (Katie Gatens writes). Four other young men appear from the shrubs.

After crossing the border illegally into the north African Spanish territory of Ceuta last week, Daharchi, 25, has been hiding in Ceuta's mountains for four days.

Suddenly an armoured vehicle screeches into the car park of the Mirador de Isabel II viewpoint and khaki-clad officers jump out. The migrants run down the mountain in clouds of dust, the officers close behind.

On Friday Spain's interior minister announced that 48,300 of the 60,000 migrants who rushed into Ceuta last week had returned to Morocco. They did so voluntarily after finding no food, water or shelter. Yesterday the number of migrant deaths reached 72.

But a small and dedicated number remain, attempting to seek asylum or travel to the Iberian peninsula via people smugglers.

Meanwhile, Santiago Abascal, the leader of Spain's hard-right Vox party, travelled to Ceuta and demanded a "permanent closure of the border crossing" until Rabat could guarantee that the crisis would never occur again.

Last night Rachid Khalfi, a Moroccan interior ministry spokesman, blamed the influx of migrants on social media, people smugglers and "erroneous interpretations of legal and administrative data", referring to a recent ruling in Spain's Supreme Court that migrants could not be returned from Ceuta to Morocco if they had entered by sea. Khalfi put the number of migrants at 40,000 and 11 deaths — much lower than the Spanish figures.

In the small village of Benzu on the outskirts of the main town, yesterday migrants milling around on the streets were rounded up by police and army officers and directed towards Benitez beach, where they were stopped from leaving. "We will round them up like sheep," an officer said.

On Benitez beach, outside the city, hundreds lay in shallow troughs in the sand, without shelter. Hundreds more sat outside the temporary immigration centre.

In the mountains of Ceuta helicopters circled while officers patrolled hiking trails and armoured vehicles and Jeeps cruised the roads. There are six bases and barracks on Ceuta with about 3,500 soldiers stationed here.

Daharchi planned to evade the police and make it to Europe. "I don't want to live in Spain — there's too

many immigrants," he said. "I want to live in France — a very good country, it's safer."

He is from Tetouan, Morocco, and earns €300 (£265) a month as a bricklayer; he financially supports his parents, his sister and nephew. "It's not enough, I have to call my friends every month to help me out," he said.

Some Ceuta residents came to the car park to hand out food and cigarettes. "I felt I had to do something, so I'm here to give them some water," said Julia, who didn't give her surname.

Two Moroccans swapped numbers with the migrants. We were told they were people smugglers gathering contacts.

Hiding out in Benzu, Alae Eddine Boulaaz, from Tangier, had already made contact with them. Boulaaz explained there were people in Benzu offering to take migrants to mainland Spain, with three on one jet ski — a driver and two migrants who each pay €7,000.

"Yesterday we saw them depart five times," he said. He claimed to have family in Almeria who could pay for him.

Boulaaz, 23, travelled with his brother, Anass, 21, on his motorbike and then abandoned it before swimming to Ceuta. Many people have already gone back but he insisted he would not be one of them. "I'd rather die than they send me home," he said.

Lowe offers Farage alliance of 'patriotic' right

Oliver Wright

The leader of Restore Britain has offered Nigel Farage a deal to unite the "patriotic right" of British politics, as there is evidence that his party is damaging Reform UK's electoral prospects.

Rupert Lowe said he was prepared to put aside his personal differences and work with Farage if Reform adopted some of his party's policies. These include demands for the mass deportation of illegal immigrants in the UK, a ban on the burqa and halal meat, and a referendum on the death penalty.

Lowe insisted that former Tory ministers such as Robert Jenrick and Suella Braverman must be excluded from any Reform-Restore cabinet.

The Restore leader has been a thorn in Farage's side since he was suspended as a Reform MP last March over bullying allegations. The multi-millionaire's party has eroded support for Farage on

the right and is polling at about 5 per cent nationally.

Restore came fourth in the Greater Manchester mayoral election on Friday with 9 per cent of first-preference votes, ahead of the Tories and the Lib Dems.

In a video posted on X, Lowe said if Farage was prepared to engage with "serious policies, serious reform, and serious government, then so are we".

He added: "Millions of British people deserve a patriotic government to put our national interest before any personal differences that you and I may have. Now is the time to put our differences aside and co-operate for the good of the country that we all love."

The Restore leader said the "patriotic right" was hopelessly divided, saying: "If we can agree on five fundamental principles, then I believe we can, should and must find a way of working together in some form."

Farage gave a tepid response to

Lowe's offer, saying that there would "always be a home in Reform UK" for former supporters of other parties.

"After two national election victories in as many years, many people now recognise that it will be a binary choice between Reform UK and Labour," Farage added. "Patriotic voters believe in many of the same things, but only one party truly has the possibility of delivering change."

Restore will not be standing against Farage in the forthcoming Clacton by-election, which the Reform leader triggered after revelations about the party's funding and a £5 million

gift he received from a cryptocurrency billionaire.

Farage is set to comfortably win, after all of the main opposition parties refused to field candidates. In their place a record 34 candidates — largely independent — are standing in the by-election, which is taking place on August 13.

Constituency polling by Survation, for Mandate Research, found that Farage could win the seat with as much as 73 per cent of the vote on a very low turnout.

However, opposition to Farage has crystallised around support for the joke candidate

Count Binface, who is polling at about 20 per cent.

Polling for the next general election found that Farage still held a strong lead in the constituency, with about 56 per cent support among likely voters. Labour and the Conservatives are on a distant 8 and 10 per cent respectively.

Conservative strategists hope that if Farage is found to have breached Commons sleaze rules, support will fall and they will be able to squeeze Reform's vote in the seat if there is a second by-election.

The failure of the main parties to stand in the by-election has led to a record number of independent candidates putting themselves forward. As a result voters will be faced with the longest ballot paper in British political history, which is costing four times as much to print as regular ballot papers, the local council has said. At 90cm (3ft), it is longer than most adults' arms.

Count Binface is polling at 20 per cent in Clacton





World class Tartan-clad performers of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo are joined on the Royal Mile by colleagues from the German Army Band, the Qatar Police Academy Band and Drill Team, New Zealand Army Band, the RAF King's Colour Squadron and the US Army Field Band before this year's event, which starts on Friday

Thousands of replacement buses are set for final stop

Laurence Sleator

The announcement on the station concourse of a "rail replacement bus service" may inspire groans of despair from passengers but the consolation, albeit small, is that it has at least turned up.

But this is now no longer guaranteed, with thousands of buses and coaches being pulled from service.

Government changes to the accessibility rules about the equipment a rail replacement bus must have now means many private operator vehicles are no longer eligible.

Before the changes, which came into force on Saturday, a survey shared with The Times found that among more than 170 private bus and coach companies, the number of vehicles available for train operators would drop by more than two thirds. This is equivalent to the loss of more than 3,000 vehicles.

If replicated across the hundreds of private companies paid by individual rail operators to provide transport during engineering work or emergencies, the disruption could be stark.

Experts said this would leave passengers stuck at stations, and rail companies could cancel services altogether to run fewer trains on the timetable.

Graham Hayden, director of Travel-Net Systems, which manages transport bookings for companies, said: "Passengers are going to be left stranded at railway stations or have to endure unnecessary extended delays waiting for vehicles. Rail companies are equally as concerned and really worried about it."

The changes relate to laws around ensuring that buses and coaches are more accessible for disabled passengers. Any private operator wanting to run a vehicle as a replacement bus must have signs displaying route information, provide wheelchair spaces and interior audible announcements.

But private companies say the cost of fitting each vehicle to be fully compliant is about £50,000, meaning many are reluctant to invest when they primarily run as holiday touring buses where the same rules do not apply.

Keith McNally, the operations director at the Confederation of Passenger Transport, said that the organisation was "confident" there would be enough compliant vehicles to keep rail replacement going, but added that rail operators may "have to look a bit further afield for operators" this summer.

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: "The industry has known since 2017 that these accessibility requirements were coming, and we gave rail replacement operators a two-year exemption and dedicated funding to support them."

Rail firm closes loophole that let travellers cheat barriers

Laurence Sleator
Transport Correspondent

A train company has begun a major crackdown on fare-evading commuters, after it found that many were using a new scam technique to avoid paying the full price for their ticket.

South Western Railways (SWR) said its data showed up to 95 per cent of barcode tickets purchased between Vauxhall and London Waterloo were being used fraudulently. The technique is known as "short faring" or "short ticketing", where customers buy a digital ticket for only the last part of their journey. This allows them to scan through the barriers at their destination.

As of June, SWR has blocked the purchase of digital tickets between Vauxhall and Waterloo, which is said to have stopped at least £45,000 worth of evasion in its first four weeks. The crack-

down came after the team became suspicious over the number of tickets from Vauxhall being presented at Waterloo.

A few months ago, SWR teams performed a series of "blocks", using a 50-strong team of inspectors to close off all exits at Waterloo, with a separate smaller team at Vauxhall. British Transport Police provided support.

Officers manually checked every ticket. Anyone who claimed to have come from Vauxhall but whose QR code was not scanned at the station was pulled up and questioned.

Jakob Grun, the senior revenue protection manager at SWR, said: "We essentially seal off Vauxhall. So we make sure that every person travelling through there has scanned a ticket to get through those gates."

"A common reason is 'the gates were open', 'they let me through', so then it's a simple phone call from the team at

Waterloo to the team at Vauxhall to say 'have you let anyone through? Has anyone pushed through? Have the gates been open?' If the answer to all those is 'no' then we advise the customer 'we have people at Vauxhall, you haven't come from Vauxhall, where have you come from?'

"We've had everyday commuters, we've had customers who've just done it as a one-off because they heard it was a way to get cheap tickets, students, graduate earners. It's those who are trying to defraud the system because they have found a loophole."

If the customer is adjudged to have travelled fraudulently, they are issued with a penalty fare notice of £100 plus the cost of their actual journey. SWR will also look at their purchase history to see if they are a repeat offender.

One customer owed more than £11,000 after repeatedly travelling from

Hampshire to London without the correct ticket over four years, and another used the technique to evade £20,000 in over three years travelling between Surrey and London. Grun said one customer who had travelled from South Hampshire to Waterloo five days a week "settled with us for £49,000".

Fare evasion is estimated to cost the rail industry £400 million a year. Across the SWR and NR Wessex network, it costs them close to £40 million a year.

Short faring is just one of many techniques used by fare evaders. Another recent example was "doughnutting", in which a passenger purchases tickets for only the start and end portions of a journey. In February, Joseph Molloy, a former HSBC executive, received a suspended sentence and fine after he used the scam at least 740 times to save almost £6,000 in rail fares over an 11-month period.

Allow automatic drivers to switch to manual after one lesson, AA says

Motorists who pass automatic driving tests should be allowed behind the wheel of a manual car after completing a one-hour conversion session, according to the AA.

Edmund King, president of the motoring services company, told the Press Association "it doesn't make sense" for them to wait months for a manual driving test.

Motorists who pass in an automatic car are only allowed to drive automatics. If they later want to drive a manual vehicle, such as when working, hiring a car or borrowing one from a friend or relative, they must pass a manual test.

Figures from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) show the average waiting time to book a test in May was nearly 22 weeks, compared with about five weeks in February 2020 before the coronavirus pandemic.

The number of learners taking automatic tests in Britain is at a record high. DVSA data shows 29.4 per cent of all tests conducted in the last financial year were in an automatic, up from about 4 per cent in 2007-08.

Electric cars, which have recently surged in popularity, do not have a conventional gearbox, meaning people who learn in them take automatic tests.



The average wait to book a test has gone up by 17 weeks since 2020

While a manual car has a gear system operated by moving the gear stick and clutch pedal, automatics change gears without the driver doing anything. This means they are generally considered easier to drive.

King said: "Most drivers of automatic cars quickly develop good road skills, so it doesn't make sense to force them to spend months overcoming the driving test backlog just to borrow a manual car. What we need is the government to approve a conversion lesson provided by driving schools so that those that pass their test in an automatic can also drive manual vehicles legally. Such a

one-hour conversion course would help those who may occasionally need to drive a manual car do so legally.

"This would be more pragmatic than retesting them in a manual vehicle when the DVSA is struggling to get rid of the current test backlog."

The Department for Transport said: "For the safety of all road users, anyone wishing to drive a manual car must pass a manual driving test, and we have no plans to change this."

Measures taken to tackle the backlog include recruiting more examiners and training them faster, and reforming the booking process.



Trailblazer's 2,300-mile trek links all national parks

Will Humphries
Countryside Correspondent

When John Scott reaches the end of his trailblazing effort to complete a new 2,300-mile trek linking all the national parks of Great Britain, he will do so in the same hiking boots he started in five months ago. "Like me, they are showing their age," Scott, 65, said as he tramped through the Cairngorms National Park in the Scottish Highlands.

The conflict resolution mediator is nearing his final destination of Nairn, near Inverness, this week, having set off from Cromer, Norfolk, on March 1. He has hiked largely solo through 15 national parks to test the Slow Ways National Parks Trail, a crowdsourced hiking route he believes could become Britain's answer to the Appalachian Trail in the United States.

The national parks trail is the brainchild of Dan Raven-Ellison, an explorer and the founder of Slow Ways, a movement that seeks to build an online network of walks that link all the settlements in the UK. The network relies on volunteers mapping routes, which other people can then check, review and improve before they are verified.

The walks are graded for difficulty and suitability by other users. Once at least three people have walked and reviewed a proposed Slow Way positively

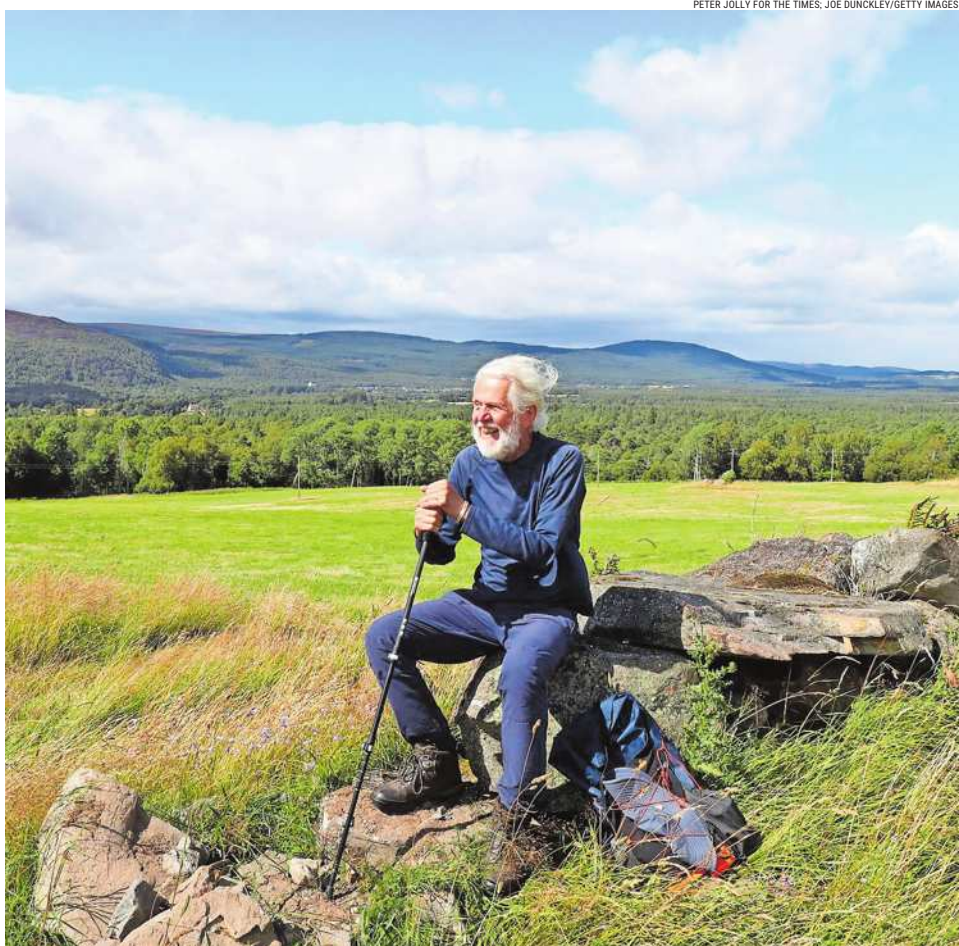
it becomes verified and can be trusted. Scott ventured into the unknown by becoming the first person to tackle the proposed national parks trail, made from 253 individual routes, some of which varied considerably in quality.

Following some of the unreviewed routes could be "a bit of a lottery", he said. He found the paths of southern England generally strong, while some inland routes in Wales were among the most difficult. "The poor routes challenged my patience and indeed my body, and the absence of any review was always a red flag," he said.

Despite this he found the route "generally good", but added: "As expected it is not yet fit for purpose as a long-distance trail. We need more local people to join in with Slow Ways, helping to check not just their part of the national parks trail, but routes that connect other places too."

Scott, who is married with two stepchildren, works as a mediator and is a professor at the University of Stirling. He started walking seriously in his mid-thirties and completed the Appalachian Trail in 2000. The idea for his latest journey came while he was helping to test an earlier version of the national parks trail last year.

"The idea of taking on the whole challenge entered my thick skull and wouldn't go away," he said. "I wish I had



John Scott's five-month journey has taken him from the Cairngorms in Scotland, above, to the Lake District, top left

The route



a more sophisticated explanation."

Scott typically covered between 15 and 20 miles a day. His routine was uncomplicated. "Wake, eat, pack, walk, unpack, eat, sleep, repeat," he said.

Having chosen not to camp, he stayed in hotels and pubs. His pack weighed between 12lb and 15lb before food and water were added.

The hardest psychological stretch came during the 480-mile passage through Wales. Scott compared it to the "Virginia blues", a term used on the Appalachian Trail to describe the dispiriting sense of making little progress during its roughly 500-mile passage through Virginia. "The route through Wales is stunning and the people were very generous," he said. "But it felt like a long way from home and a very long way to Nairn."

He has encountered fewer walkers than he had expected. Outside famous long-distance paths such as the Coast to Coast and busy outdoor destinations including the Lake District, many routes were almost empty.

His best moment came when he crossed the border into Scotland on foot. It was his first time doing so after more than 40 years of crossing it by train, car and, in his late teens and early twenties, while hitchhiking.

Raven-Ellison said: "I'd love to see the national parks trail properly developed so lots more people can enjoy it. For now, it is a great challenge and maybe one that, for a while, will be a bit more like walking from Land's End to John O'Groats, with people finding different ways to complete it. Slow Ways is built for that. Instead of looking at a map and having no idea which paths or lanes are good ways to go, people can quickly find routes that have been walked, checked and rated by other people."

Every path Scott followed, every obstruction he recorded and every route he reviewed will help shape a safer, clearer and more dependable trail for the next person. Asked what advice he would give anyone thinking of following in his footsteps, Scott was characteristically direct. "Get on with it," he said.

As for his own immediate plans, he intends to spend time with his family, sleep in his own bed and "bury my walking boots for ever."

Maintaining a walking route through every national park is a service to posterity, leading article, page 21

All in all, Pink Floyd's 'Wall' studio is restored as creative hub

Ellie McDonald

The historic north London recording studio where Pink Floyd created 1979's *The Wall* has opened its doors to musicians once again, having lain vacant for more than a decade.

Britannia Row Studios in Islington was founded by the rock band in 1975. Over the decades it hosted a stellar roster of artists, from Joy Division and Pulp to Adele, James Blunt, and Kylie Minogue. However, after Nick Mason, the Pink Floyd drummer, sold the business in the 1990s, the facility became financially unviable and closed in 2010.

In 2018 Islington council approved plans to convert the Victorian ware-

house and former church hall into eight flats. But after the permission expired, the site was acquired by Har-monic, a different property group, last year.

Kamel Jaber, a director at Har-monic, said the company intervened after learning that self-storage operators were among the prospective buyers.

"You don't get this kind of space available in London very often. So when I saw this, from the graffiti that's still left around there to the stories that you hear from the neighbours, we knew we wanted to be part of that history," Jaber said.

"It was especially so when we heard some of the other buyers were self-storage companies. We thought that would

be a shame when we have a strategy around how we can empower creative spaces.

Har-monic has invested £60,000 in restoring the space, employing local architects, builders and decorators in an effort to champion the area's culture. The entire premises has been leased to the

Britannia Row Studios in Islington after the renovation



Florence Trust, an arts charity, for just £1.

The firm's motives are not entirely philanthropic; it is seeking its own planning permission to deliver loft-style apartments across the rest of the building, though the permanent creative space will remain available at below market-rates to cultural industry businesses. The revitalised venue is

already hosting concerts, art exhibitions and dance classes.

Britannia Row's place in music history was cemented during the recording of *The Wall*, one of the bestselling albums of all time. The studio's producer, Nick Griffiths, famously recruited a music teacher and pupils from the nearby Islington Green School to provide the children's choir for the track *Another Brick in the Wall*.

The rescue of Britannia Row comes amid a wider crisis for the capital's recording studios. According to the Music Producers Guild, half of UK studios have considered closing due to unsustainable increases in rateable values and energy costs.

Paranoia over 'spy on trawler' led to sanctions

Mark Hollingsworth

A year after the Ukraine war broke out a Russian intelligence agent boarded a fishing trawler called Taurus just off the coast of Norway.

He was under surveillance by the Norwegian security services, who had noted his covert meetings through the northern regions of the country.

Norway's state TV channel, NRK, had reported Russian fishing vessels could be used for spying along the Nordic coast. The owner of Taurus, the Russian company Norebo, was duly sanctioned by the European Union and Norway on the strength of NRK's reporting, but there was just one problem: the story was untrue.

The Norebo case illustrates a creeping spy phobia in the Baltic states. One of Latvia's intelligence agencies has warned its citizens there are Russian saboteurs in their midst and given them a guide on how to spot them.

A "shabby, unkempt appearance" or "insufficient hygiene" is said to be a clue on how to identify a Russian secret operative. Individuals asking lots of questions is apparently a sign, as is a short haircut or a passion for outdoor survival equipment and radios.

The sanctioning of this obscure Russian company also provides an insight into concerns over the EU's sanctions policy. After EU sanctions against the

Russian billionaires Mikhail Fridman and Petyr Aven were removed due to lack of evidence, the EU advocate Professor Andrea Biondi, said: "Sanctions must rely on a sufficiently solid factual basis. Context may inform but cannot replace legal proof."

In Norway, the Norebo affair began in 2024 when the Barents Observer newspaper followed up the NRK story, quoting from an EU document which said: "Shipping vessels owned and operated by Norebo have been equipped with technology that may be used for espionage." It said that Russian fishing ships were "mapping critical infrastructure and conducting human intelligence gatherings in Norwegian waters". It falsely reported Norebo's owner, Vitaly Orlov, was "a friend of Vladimir Putin".

Last May the EU implemented sanctions against Norebo and its assets were frozen in member states, markets closed and logistics services denied. "Vessels owned and operated by Norebo show movement patterns linked by EU member states to the Russian state-sponsored surveillance campaign that employs civilian fishing trawlers to conduct espionage missions directed against civilian and military infrastructure in the Baltic Sea," the EU said.

Intelligence analysts have no doubt Russia conducts espionage operations off the coast of Norway, but they say

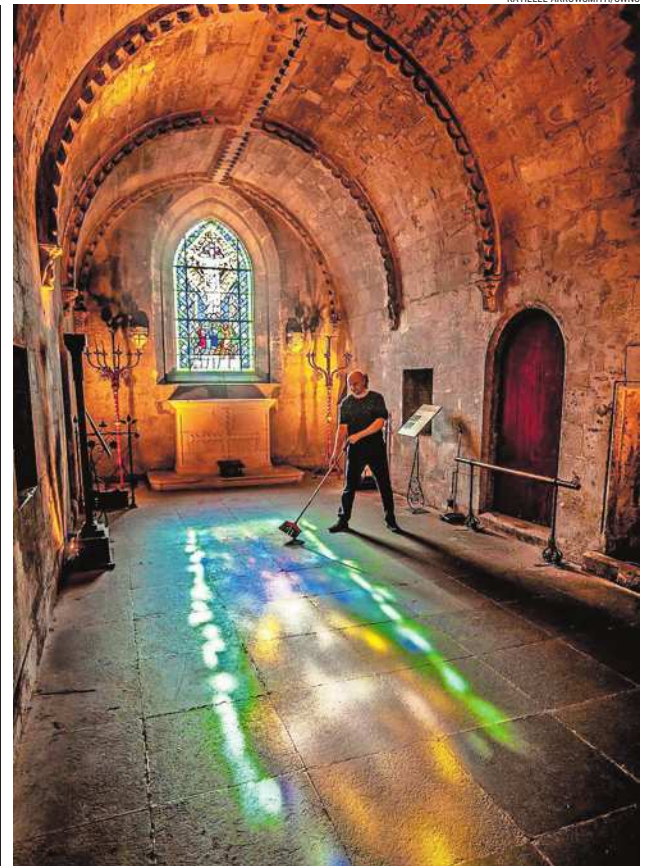
targeting Norebo risks missing genuine threats. Ole Fostad, a former intelligence analyst, said: "The sanctions are based on imaginary wrongdoings, flawed evidence and does not hold scrutiny. The Shadow War series [by NRK] has become Norwegian foreign policy. It is very embarrassing and dangerous."

Orlov said: "Norebo is the victim of an attack by competitors who made clearly and provably false allegations which have been accepted by the EU without any investigation because we are Russian."

Norebo has filed an appeal against the EU sanctions and will rely on testimony by a UK military intelligence officer who has served in the Ministry of Defence for the past 38 years.

After reviewing the data, satellites and vessel logs of nine fishing vessels owned by Norebo, the intelligence officer concluded there were no unauthorised entries.

In response the EU said that like most cases involving sanctions, it considered published media reports as sufficient proof to establish Norebo implemented and supported actions by Russia. NRK said that the intelligence activity was "extensive, systematic and long-lasting" but admitted it could not "confirm the story". Barents Observer declined to comment. Norebo is suing the newspaper for libel.



Cleanliness next to godliness A worker sweeps in the light shining through the crypt's stained glass window in the 15th-century Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh

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Munchetty to host away from Salford

Bosses at the BBC have been accused of giving Naga Munchetty “special treatment” after it was revealed that she would be allowed to regularly present the Radio 5 Live breakfast show from London (Alex Farber writes).

The 51-year-old presenter announced that she was leaving *BBC Breakfast* after 17 years last week to take over the weekday radio show from January.

Some staff are unimpressed that Munchetty, who was paid about £360,000 last year, will be able to present two shows each week for the Salford-based station from London. A BBC job advert seeking Munchetty's co-chief presenter has stipulated that they will be required to broadcast from Salford five days a week.

“The non-Salford shows are becoming a talking point as more presenters are given special treatment to do it,” said one staffer at the BBC. “I’m not sure it’s what [culture secretary] Lisa Nandy and Andy Burnham envisioned [for the BBC’s] Salford base.”

Other Radio 5 Live presenters who broadcast from both Salford and London include Nicky

Campbell. The mid-morning presenter works from different BBC locations according to the editorial and operational requirements of his programme.

“Salford still hasn’t really worked as envisaged,” another BBC insider said. “It’s just more evidence of a two-tier system.”

Radio 5 Live relocated to Salford in 2011 as part of BBC plans to better reflect audiences and spread its investment in programming outside of the capital.

In its annual report, published last month, it announced that it was closing in on the target to spend half its radio budget outside London as part of its three-year Across the UK programme.

However, despite the spend in Salford, audiences in the north of England said that they felt less well served by the BBC than any other region.

A BBC spokesperson said that the fact that Radio 5 Live presenters broadcast from a variety of BBC bases did not change the station's commitment to Salford.

“BBC Radio 5 Live is proudly based in Salford, which remains the main production base for the station and 5 Live Breakfast,” they added.



Naga Munchetty will present her show at Salford-based Radio 5 Live from London twice a week

Pious planners behave badly, claims Clunes

Martin Clunes has criticised “pious” planning officials who allowed a travellers’ site to be built next to his £5 million country home.

The *Men Behaving Badly* star objected to “flimsy” plans for a farm on the other side of his property in Dorset.

Andy Cream and Grace Burger want to build a storage barn, two polytunnels and a greenhouse. Clunes, 64, fears the couple will set up a permanent home on the land 150 yards from Higher Meerhay Farm, near Beaminster, where he lives with wife, Philippa Braithwaite, a TV producer.

Earlier this year Dorset council granted Theo Langton and Ruth McGill, who are new age travellers, permission to set up a site 300 yards from the Clunes’ luxury farmhouse. The star accused his neighbours of being “dishonest”, saying that they were not bona fide travellers and not entitled to a permanent site.

Cream and Burger submitted plans for a temporary agricultural workers’ dwelling in July last year. This was dropped after backlash from neighbours, including Clunes and Braithwaite. They resubmitted the application in April just for the farm.

Clunes wrote in his objection: “I think that it is safe to assume, given the flimsy nature of their business plan, that living at the site is their ultimate goal. From personal experience my advice to these applicants would be to carry on and do whatever they like on the land they have bought. They can ignore any rulings or conditions applied by Dorset county council as they will not enforce them.”

Dorset council was contacted for comment.

Details of 100,000 police staff hacked

Bill Curtis

The full names and contact details for more than 100,000 police officers and staff have been leaked on the dark web after a hack, *The Times* can reveal.

As part of a major security breach, hackers also compromised data belonging to the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Home Office, National Crime Agency (NCA), and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

This means three government departments have been caught up in hacks recently after the Department for Education (DfE) had more than half a million pieces of data compromised last week.

Officers’ details, including their force’s location, were leaked by hackers who breached the police national legal database (PNLD), which provides legal assistance to forces. The database hack, first reported last week, was not thought to be serious.

A little-known cybercriminal group named ExfilSquad are believed to be responsible. The group has infiltrated multiple western targets.

One official whose details were leaked by the breach said it was “very disconcerting”. The official said: “I have worked in serious organised crime and put high-level criminals behind bars. For private information to be leaked about me is very disconcerting and puts officers at serious risk.”

“In the past I have been forced to move into safe houses and sell cars due to my job. Now I will have to keep my wits about me online and look out for anyone trying to get more serious

information. It is not a good look.”

ExfilSquad came to public attention last week when *The Times* revealed the DfE was hacked, which resulted in 607,000 pieces of sensitive data being put on the dark web. It was believed the hack was done for financial gain, not ideological purposes.

An online statement from the group read: “Once your company’s data is posted here, it’s never leaving the public eye and it will be passed around the internet forever. The payment we request of you is simply a rounding error compared to the litigation costs of your data leaking. Be smart and just pay.”

Police sources confirmed the details of 114,000 PNLD subscribers were leaked, with the vast majority belonging to officers. The full names and contact details of 2,615 CPS staff, 617 Home Office employees, 588 NCA staff and 402 MoD personnel were also leaked. *The Times* has independently verified some names listed.

Most officers have used the legal database while carrying out their day-to-day duty, one source said. The system covers England and Wales, where the equivalent of 145,550 full-time officers are employed.

Tiff Lynch, chair of the Police Federation, said the breach “raises serious concerns for officer and staff safety. At a time when cyber threats are becoming increasingly sophisticated, [the police] and its partners must be properly funded to ensure the strongest possible cyber security protections are in place to safeguard sensitive personal data.”

Another 21,000 email addresses of

Behind the story

ExfilSquad is a newcomer on the hacking scene

(Mark Sellman writes), bursting into life at the end of last month by posting details of 15 alleged victims, including the Department of Education and Police National Legal Database, on its dark web site.

It appears to be a group that steals data rather than engage in

ransomware that extorts victims by crippling their systems. In an exchange with the DataBreaches website, the hackers said they exploited misconfigured security settings on websites set up using Microsoft tools.

They also used a picture of Allison Nixon, a prominent cybersecurity researcher, for their profile. Nixon is an expert in tracking

members of the Com, a network of English-speaking hackers and violent extortionists.

She said “using my picture does suggest they are affiliated with the Com. Victims should be sceptical about paying them as a result. Com members are notorious for breaking promises and being mentally unstable.” Public bodies in the UK are banned from paying hackers.

members of the public who had submitted a non-emergency question on Ask the Police, a website for the public to ask questions of the police, were released. There is no evidence to suggest that passwords or other security credentials have been compromised.

Experts said it was significant ExfilSquad had gained secure data from three government departments, especially the MoD. “Unfortunately government organisations are being seen as softer targets because they have not invested enough to properly protect private information,” said Jake Moore, global security adviser at Eset, Europe’s leading cybersecurity company.

“The information put on the dark

web should not be underestimated. More experienced threat actors see it as highly valuable because it enables them to personalise follow-up attacks, such as phishing or social engineering, which puts even more data at risk.”

It can be disclosed that Newcastle University launched an investigation after the group was alleged to have stolen 440,000 pieces of sensitive data. Sample data on the dark web showed the full names, phone numbers, home addresses and email addresses of students and staff. “We continue to monitor the situation closely and have the appropriate controls and protections in place,” a university spokesman said.

The group’s suspected activity is not

limited to British organisations. In dark web posts, ExfilSquad claimed to have stolen 6 million pieces of data from the City of Houston government system and a further 3 million from the City of Atlanta. In another unconfirmed attack, it said it obtained 8 million records relating to customers and employees of Microsoft, including password hashes, which are scrambled passwords.

The number of cyberattacks classed as “highly significant”, which is defined by the effect on central government or a large number of the UK population, increased from 1 in 2022 to 19 in 2024.

Moore said: “These attacks are becoming more common as criminals increasingly automate their tactics with ease and exploit the development using AI. The knock-on effect means organisations are facing a far higher volume of attacks, often with far less effort required from the attacker.”

The North East Regional Organised Crime Unit has started an investigation into the PNLD hack.

A government spokesman said: “We have dedicated capabilities to respond to cyber incidents, and it would be inappropriate to comment on a live investigation.” Affected agencies and departments are “liaising closely with partners to assess any impact and support those affected”.

An NCA spokesman said: “We are aware that limited personal details relating to a number of National Crime Agency officers may have been published on the dark web as a result of the incident affecting the police national legal database.”

IOUNIS PHOTOGRAPHY/SPLASH NEWS



Raye of sunshine The singer-songwriter Raye, 28, headlined Brighton Pride festival at the weekend, playing a cover of the Prince song *Purple Rain* during a 90-minute set

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'Authors may have to prove work is not AI'

Mark Sellman
Technology Correspondent

Authors should prepare to prove their work is their own because of the growing use of "AI detectors", the head of a literary prize has said.

Razmi Farook, director-general of the Commonwealth Foundation, issued the warning after her organisation's short story prize became embroiled in an AI authorship row.

Several regional winners of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize were accused of using AI to write their stories, including Jamir Nazir, who won the overall award for *The Serpent in the Grove*, an entry about a struggling farmer in Trinidad.

Farook said all the authors were cleared after a thorough investigation into the claims of AI use. The foundation asked Nazir and all the regional winners to submit documentary evidence of their writing, including earlier drafts, photographs, explanations of inspirations and their storytelling process.

All writers should now prepare for similar scrutiny, she said in an interview with *The Times*: "I think writers should be prepared to share a reasonable oversight or view of their writing process to date."

Many of the accusations against Nazir involved the use of Pangram, a detector of AI writing that is now being used to identify AI-generated content on the newsletter platform Substack and the academic site Arxiv.

Farook said she believed that tools such as Pangram are not reliable enough, especially for Commonwealth writers. Pangram says it falsely identifies AI writing in 1 of 10,000 cases.

She said: "The margins of error of some of the AI [detection] tools, when they're definitive, are con-



Razmi Farook said she backed the prizewinner Jamir Nazir, below

cerning for us because of the volume of submissions we have.

"The Commonwealth Story Prize, in some ways, is more challenging for an AI detector. Firstly, seven of our 13 languages aren't even amenable to AI detectors."

Asked whether she thought the AI detectors were racially biased, Farook responded: "I don't know if I would use racially biased but I would definitely say, there are cultural connotations, because obviously what's being fed in is what's being fed out."

Farook said that Nazir was feeling "bruised" by the row as "some of the social media commentary was extremely toxic. He's also not particularly well. He's going through chemotherapy. It's a huge sacrifice for him but he was obviously feeling very unfairly treated."

"He did provide evidence of his writing ... he also talked in detail about his writing process. It was very, very detailed and very convincing."

Asked to give a per-

centage of confidence in Nazir, Farook said: "I'm more confident than less confident. So, definitely 75 per cent, 80 per cent; I'm willing to really go with the writer."

The director general said that the Commonwealth and other literary prizes were developing new policies to grapple with AI use.

Farook said it would be unrealistic to completely ban use of the technology but transparency would be key. "It's more important to us to ... have really clear guidance on how they can use it and what they can use it for."

Pangram, a tool developed by a US start-up, was used to identify AI content in *Shy Girl*, a novel by Mia Ballard, which was subsequently pulled by the publisher Hachette.

It has now been integrated into the newsletter platform Substack after its chief executive said "it's getting harder to tell what's real on the internet" and that "when content made by no one takes over parts of the internet that are supposed to be human, it ... makes it hard to discover and hear human voices".

That decision has been met with a backlash from some writers who have called it a witch hunt.

Max Spero, the chief executive of Pangram, has defended his software's identification of Nazir's work as AI-generated. He said: "It's clear to anyone who uses AI regularly that this story is either fully AI-generated or heavily AI-assisted. There are numerous indications that ChatGPT, specifically, had major influence in the prose. People online noticed this immediately and used Pangram to confirm their suspicion."

"Pangram is rarely incorrect when it classifies text as AI. It has a 1 in 10,000 false positive rate. It's much more likely that the judges aren't familiar with AI tools and couldn't tell. Research has shown that those unfamiliar with AI text struggle to detect it, while people who frequently use ChatGPT for writing tasks are accurate and robust detectors of AI-generated text."

One in six use bots for health advice

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

One in six adults use AI bots such as ChatGPT to get health advice, leading to what medical leaders have warned is a tide of misinformation.

The Academy of Medical Sciences said that lives are at risk from myths and false information online, particularly around vaccines, treatment options and fertility advice.

A representative poll of 2,401 UK adults by Ipsos found that AI is a regular source of health information for 16 per cent of UK adults, rising to 24 per cent of 25-to-34-year-olds and 28 per cent of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Research has shown that AI may provide inaccurate medical guidance or diagnoses, and fails to recognise symptoms including life-threatening emergencies.

The report found that medical misinformation is widespread, yet most people "do not recognise it as a personal risk" and believe they are able to spot it. Nearly one in five adults say they have been personally affected by misleading health information.

Some 56 per cent said they felt vaccines were seriously affected by mis-

leading claims, 41 per cent cited weight loss and nutrition, and 36 per cent highlighted cancer treatment.

Misinformation has contributed to a spate of measles outbreaks in the UK as uptake of routine childhood vaccinations has been falling for the past 15 years. Data shows that only 83.7 per cent of five-year-olds in England have received both doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, the lowest level since 2010.

The Academy of Medical Sciences said it is vital that medical leaders try to tackle health misinformation by "reaching people where they already are" including on social media and online.

Sir Andrew Morris, the academy's president, said: "A message is far more likely to land when it comes from a source and a community people already trust, regardless of how strong the underlying evidence is."

"The challenge for medical science is not only to produce reliable evidence but to ensure it reaches people in ways they can act on — through voices they recognise, in places they already go for information."

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, of the University of Cambridge, said: "The

findings reveal most people recognise that health misinformation poses a serious threat to society but far fewer believe they themselves are vulnerable to being misled — we have an optimism bias."

"As the ways people access health information continue to evolve, it is increasingly important to understand who is most at risk and how we can help everyone access reliable, evidence-based information."

Ann John, a professor of public health and psychiatry at Swansea University, said: "Perhaps it's not surprising that many people believe health misinformation is something that affects others rather than themselves. Yet false health information spreads faster than the facts, influencing decisions about vaccines, treatments and healthy behaviours."

Katie Rollings, the chief executive and founder of Fertility Action, said: "Fertility and reproductive health is a powerful example of how health misinformation can thrive in areas where people are vulnerable, anxious, overwhelmed and searching for answers. This research reinforces why trusted, evidence-based information matters so much."

Bridesmaids try something old to beat the big-day bills

Ed Halford

Being asked was once the ultimate honour and the sign of a strong friendship. But growing numbers of potential bridesmaids say that the role has become so expensive that they are now considering turning down the obligation, while others are cutting costs by wearing second-hand outfits.

A survey of 2,000 women in July by the polling company Think BF found that almost a quarter of bridesmaids had contemplated declining the role due to its associated costs. Among 25 to 34-year-olds, that figure jumps to more than one in three (35 per cent).

Kate Greenhalgh, 45, recently bought her daughter Phoebe a £6 blue dress on Vinted, the online marketplace, for her sister's wedding. She said she appreciated why people were turning to the site as the churn of weddings could be "relentless".

Greenhalgh said it seemed silly to spend lots of money on a dress when "you're not going to wear it for a night out or to a party because you'll look like a bridesmaid". The tendency for guests to post photos on social media after the day also reduced the likelihood of the dress being worn again as "everyone will have seen the pictures and instantly know it's a bridesmaid dress", Greenhalgh said.

Another upside of buying such a cheap dress, Greenhalgh pointed out, was that it could easily be



Kate Greenhalgh bought her daughter Phoebe a £6 blue dress on Vinted

sold to a new buyer, as Phoebe's dress had been since being listed online.

Greenhalgh recalls how anxious she felt during her twenties when she had three weddings in Cornwall, Cheshire and Leeds in the space of three months. "Looking back at this period, I was probably living off credit cards at the time and I did not want to say no to things as I was 25 and didn't want to miss out," she said.

For one of the weddings she was invited to, Greenhalgh said she had to give the hen party a miss as the costs were "overwhelming".

It's not just bridesmaids who are trying to combat the costs that come with attending weddings. This summer, research from Tesco Bank reported by The Times showed that 31 per cent of wedding invitees had RSVP'd with a polite "no" purely for financial reasons — a number that rises to 43 per cent for millennials and 48 per cent for Gen Z.

Between travel, accommodation, gifts, outfits, and hen and stag dos, the average cost of attending a single wedding now stands at £316.

Influencers on TikTok are bringing further attention to the range of cheaper dresses available at online marketplaces by showcasing formal wear that spares guests the anxiety of incurring hefty credit card bills further down the line.

Vinted reports a 17 per cent year-on-year increase in searches for second-hand bridesmaid dresses on its site. Research attributed to SilkFred found that 59 per cent of former bridesmaids said the costs attached to their

role were far more than they expected.

"Being asked to be a bridesmaid is a special moment, but the cost of taking part is leaving some women questioning whether they can afford to say yes," said Euan Steedman, a spokesman at Vinted. "More than one-in-three women have already worn a second-hand outfit to a wedding, showing people want to celebrate without compromising on style, or overspending."



"Nell the Ginger", a TikTok influencer, shows off her used bridesmaid's dress bought online for £10. The average cost of attending a wedding stands at £316

E-bike operator agrees to provide crash insurance

Millie Brigaud

One of London's most popular e-bike operators will provide riders with insurance after several high-profile crashes.

Forest, which operates in 20 of London's boroughs, will have third-party insurance to protect people injured and property damaged by cyclists on their e-bikes starting in September, after reporting by The Times revealed people facing life-altering injuries would not get compensation.

Sandy Peters was thrown face-first into a brick wall by a teenager riding a Forest bike on the pavement in October in the London borough of Sutton. She still has multiple broken bones, which will take up to two years to heal, and needs an estimated £10,000 worth of dental repair work on teeth that have suffered permanent nerve damage.

Peters has been left to pay for her transport to and from weekly hospital appointments and any private medical bills herself. She is one of several Londoners who have been in serious accidents with Forest bikes only to discover they could receive no compensation.

Forest has now secured a policy it can afford, and says it will be adopted at no added cost to riders.

"I think it's quite clear that there's been a call for e-bike operators in London to have the rider liability



Will Jansen, of e-bike operator Forest

cover," Will Jansen, the chief operating officer, said. Jansen said Forest could not afford to pay for third-party insurance when it was founded in 2020, with many providers reluctant to work with a start-up operator.

Competitors including Lime, Bolt and Santander already include coverage in their price at a cost to the rider of about one third of a penny per minute.

Peters says she is "really encouraged" that Forest will cover riders but called on ministers to make third-party insurance mandatory for all operators.

Campaigners said Forest's move was "an important first step" but it remained to be seen how effective it would be. They highlighted significant loopholes in third-party insurance policies for micro-mobility, including insurance not covering cases where a rider is on the pavement, under-age, or travels through a red light.



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'To stop a boy joining a gang, you need to save them before they're 13'

After a surge in gun violence in the capital David Woode joined officers tackling a new generation of 'hitters'

At 5.30pm on a warm Thursday in south London, a man suspected of drug dealing tried to outrun a police officer. A few frantic moments later he was under arrest, accused of swinging a crowbar at the officer's head.

Two plainclothes officers had stopped him as he rode a stolen moped in Brixton. When they opened a carrier bag tied to the moped, the 28-year-old man sprinted away. Inside were snap bags containing MDMA, cocaine and pink cocaine, a cocktail of ketamine, MDMA and caffeine mixed with pink food dye. Cannabis and £1,500 in cash were also found. Officers gave chase and cornered him in a car park, where the alleged attack unfolded. "We were rolling around on the ground until I discharged my Pava [incapacitant] spray," the officer said, catching his breath.

The man was arrested on suspicion of assault, possession of an offensive weapon and possession with intent to supply class A and class B drugs. He has since been bailed.

Just a street away at Brixton Village, a covered market popular with young professionals, affluent diners appeared oblivious to the sirens drowning out their conversation. The contrasting scenes reveal a hidden truth about life in London, one where gang activity simmers below the surface and is overlooked when it erupts at street level, but a rise in homicides in Lambeth and Southwark, prompted by escalating gangland tensions, has made this reality hard to ignore.

The Times joined the Metropolitan Police on Operation Gallium — a week-long drive to tackle gun crime and serious violence. It was led by the boroughs with support from specialist crime. By Saturday night, there had been 81 arrests, 145 searches and 12 weapons seizures. Ten homicides were recorded in Lambeth and Southwark between January 1 and June 3, almost 20 per cent of the 55 people killed in London this year. Knife crime in both boroughs fell 18 per cent in the year to June 30 but gun crime is up 5 per cent and 11 per cent respectively.

Senior police officers have been unable to pinpoint the cause of the rising violence. Detective Chief Superintendent Emma Bond, the borough commander, said: "We don't want to see another life taken or more harm caused to young people in our communities. That's why we're bringing together our resources to tackle it."

There are fears about the availability of firearms. Last year, police chiefs launched a crackdown on Turkish-made imitation pistols. A gangs expert said there were concerns about top-venting blank firearms which could be converted into deadly weapons.

"If a gang has 'beef' and they've got money in the bank, they will buy a fire-



TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Trail of blood

• Murder or shooting
May-Aug, 2026



The "central south" area of London has been rocked by murders and shootings in recent weeks.

On May 2 Keanu Taylor, 25, was the victim of a drive-by shooting while attending a barbecue in Brixton. He died two days later.

On June 13 a man in his 20s was shot in South Bermondsey and needed hospital treatment.

On June 21 Kamahl Cameron-Williams, 31, was stabbed to death in Crystal Palace. Three men aged 21 to 23 have been charged with murder. On June 23 a 26-year-old man was shot by a man riding a motorbike. He was treated for non-life-threatening injuries.

At 4.30am on July 25 Abdulkadir Mahamed, 22, was fatally stabbed in Clapham. Javed Khan, 22, from Wandsworth, has been charged with murder and violent disorder. On the same day a masked motorist pointed a gun at a man outside a Costcutter in Vauxhall. The firearm apparently jammed.



One man, top, was accused of possessing drugs including pink cocaine. Three men in a car, right, were also searched



arm and pay for a hitter. We're seeing children as young as 15 carrying guns," the source said.

The Times joined Inspector Nathan Watson, of the proactive disruptions unit, near Waterloo when he received a request for backup. Marksmen were following a black Mercedes E-class in Vauxhall and could not see inside. Watson activated his sirens and we set off for the scene. "As rare as they are, we know there are firearms in circulation. Our objective is to make our streets safer and reduce people's fear of crime. This interaction could lead to an arrest or words of advice," he said.

We arrived seven minutes later as police searched three black men in their twenties, all of whom were compliant. The £64,000 saloon car had been boxed in on the residential street and was also being searched.

An officer asked: "Have you got any questions?" One man said: "No, but it's racist." No arrests were made.

Frontline officers said that the school summer holiday was when the "next generation" of gang members, typically black boys, tended to be recruited.

"A few faces will re-emerge and by the next school year they will be fully embedded," said Detective Sergeant Phil Morrison, of the proactive disruptions unit. "If you want to stop a young person joining a gang you need to get them before they turn 13. The staple age is from 14 to 17. You don't see them on the streets from 18 or 19." Why is that?

"They're in prison, possibly dead or have found another way of life," he said. Delays in the justice system have affected how teenage boys are diverted from gangs. Police described a 15-year-old boy who had eight impending cases. Morrison asked: "How can we intervene post-offence when they are being convicted three years later?"

Detective Constable Faisal El Issaoui, attached to the proactive offender targeting and management team, said that gang elders referred to young recruits as "new plates", akin to a new car. Older members will "teach the younger generation where to stab someone and what knife to use. If a group is caught with a knife, a young person with no criminal record would be expected to take ownership," El Issaoui said. "They

know the most likely court disposal will be a referral order."

During the World Cup, the disruption team searched "three known males". Two boys were carrying knives while a third was armed with a "loaded Glock [handgun] in his waistband".

"Gangs don't like holding guns. They give them to youngsters to bed down for the night," Morrison said, adding that his team had seized six loaded guns in the past six months. "Stopping someone in possession of a gun is rare but you've genuinely intervened in something that could have been fatal. We stop these boys all the time. Initially they see us as the enemy but we build relationships with them."

At times, our unmarked car slowed and El Issaoui pointed to memorials for young murder victims. "We sometimes talk about gangs as if they're mythical things but these are young, often socially inept kids who've found a home among these people, and it's sad," Morrison said. "When I hear they've been shot or stabbed, I can't think of anything worse than losing a child to a life no one intended them to live."

Al Fayed abuse victims were trafficked

Kaya Burgess

At least five women who were sexually abused by Mohamed Al Fayed have been confirmed by the Home Office as victims of human trafficking.

They have received “conclusive grounds” decisions declaring that they are victims of modern slavery from the National Referral Mechanism, the scheme that identifies instances of human trafficking and forced labour and servitude.

The cases include both international and domestic trafficking, and one case of trafficking within the Harrods building, the Press Association reported. Al Fayed, who died in 2023 aged 94, owned Harrods, the department store in Knightsbridge, from 1985 to 2010.

In April this year, Rachael Louw was the first person confirmed to have been

classified as a victim of modern slavery after reporting that she had been abused by Al Fayed and his brother Salah, who died in 2010.

Four members of an advocacy group for victims of Al Fayed's abuse have now received the same decisions. To protect their identities, they are referred to by the pseudonyms Margo, Justine, Elizabeth and Isabella. They had been referred by the charity Unseen UK.

Margo was a domestic worker for the Fayed family after the sale of Harrods, and was recruited through the Hyde Park Residence agency.

Yesterday, she told The Times that the first red flag was being asked to undertake a gynaecological and STI exam for a role for which this was “absolutely unnecessary”.

She said: “My particular story high-

lights the fact that trafficking happened post-Harrods sale [too]. This happened no matter where Al Fayed went, no matter what he owned, the entities that he touched.”

She said she thought the police had



Mohamed Al Fayed's abuse remains the subject of a Met inquiry

been slow to refer her case to the National Referral Mechanism as a potential instance of trafficking and that she felt the investigation remained focused on the sexual assault claims.

Justine worked at Harrods for more than three years in the 1990s, during

which time she was trafficked and abused. She told the Press Association: “It's not something I realised was happening to me at the time. But it's a really significant thing, getting that decision, seeing it in writing that you were a victim of modern slavery and trafficking ... it's really shocking to read.”

Isabella, who worked in the chairman's office at Harrods in 2001, was told in May that her case was being classed as trafficking. She said: “[The public] think this was one bad man, but he couldn't have done what he did without Harrods processing women to him and silencing them afterwards. And it wasn't just Harrods, obviously. It was any entity that Al Fayed owned or had control of.”

Elizabeth, who also worked at Harrods, said: “I think there's this persistent misunderstanding, possibly within the Metropolitan Police them-

selves, which is scary, that trafficking only involves being moved across international borders. There have been positive, conclusive-grounds trafficking decisions in cases where the trafficking occurred within the Harrods building.”

The Metropolitan Police are investigating the claims of at least 156 alleged victims who contacted them directly as part of Operation Cornpoppy, which opened 19 months ago and is also looking at people who may have facilitated Al Fayed's abuse. Four people have been questioned so far.

The Home Office does not comment on National Referral Mechanism cases, but a spokeswoman said: “Our heartfelt condolences go out to all those affected by this distressing case. We are fully committed to supporting victims and giving survivors the support and certainty they need to recover.”

Claws out for diners who fled £600 bill

A group of diners enjoyed £600 worth of lobster and other seafood at a restaurant in Devon before walking out without paying (Seren Hughes writes).

The “dine and dash” incident is part of a growing trend that has affected at least a third of operators, according to the trade body UKHospitality.

Last Saturday evening, three men and three women visiting the Oyster Shack in Bigbury ordered the most expensive items on the menu: four £66 lobsters and a £120 fruits de mer platter. After finishing their meals, the group allegedly left in ones and twos without paying the £631.35 bill.

The restaurant's owner, Kieron Vanstone, told The Times the group had booked over the phone without leaving a name, so staff called them the following morning. “They said, ‘Oh sorry, we're in church. We'll



call you back,” he said. “Then we chased and then they just didn't pick up again.”

Staff left a message telling the customers that information about

them, including their phone number and the number plate of a black Range Rover, would be passed to police. Devon and Cornwall police said they were aware of the

incident and were making inquiries.

Vanstone, who bought the restaurant in 2018 after working there when he was younger, said that £100 per

person was higher than the usual order at his restaurant.

“It paints this picture of intent to do what they did,” he said. “The staff on the



Hannah Brocklehurst and Alex Thomas of the Oyster Shack in Bigbury, Devon. The group had ordered four lobsters and a fruits de mer platter

evening feel like they've been cheated and their trust has been abused.”

The restaurant shared details of the incident on social media, urging other local businesses to “remain vigilant”.

Relentless Steak and Lobster House in Portsmouth introduced pre-payment after repeated dine and dash incidents but the owner, Scott Matthews, said it was not popular with all customers.

Vanstone said he would not consider such a measure. “If we started doing pay in advance, it just feels like we don't have faith in the customer,” he said.

In one case in south Wales in June, a couple who ordered Dover sole and calamari worth £115 settled their bill after El Puerto in Penarth posted the footage on social media.

Allen Simpson, chief executive of UKHospitality, said: “Deliberately leaving without paying is a criminal offence, and businesses should not be left out of pocket because of this kind of behaviour.”

Less diversity in TV as ‘progress stalls’ after Black Lives Matter

Sanchez Manning

Social Affairs Correspondent

The representation of ethnic minority groups on and off screen in British television has fallen as the “progress” after Black Lives Matter “stalls”, a diversity study says.

According to the latest Diamond report, which tracks diversity and inclusion in the television industry annually, the percentage of on-screen roles taken by people from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds has seen its first decline since 2021.

It has dropped from 24.6 per cent in 2024 to 23.2 per cent last year after a steady rise in the three previous years from 20.9 per cent. Similarly, there has been a drop in off-screen contributions, which have decreased from 13.8 per cent in 2024 to 13 per cent in 2025. This includes all off-camera roles, from runners through to writers and directors.

This downward trend comes after a major push in the TV industry to increase the representation of ethnic minority groups in response to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

The BLM protests were sparked in

the US by the murder of George Floyd, a black man, by a white police officer during an arrest in Minneapolis in 2020.

They quickly became a global phenomenon and in the UK, broadcasters across the board made commitments to improve their records on diversity.

Sky announced a £30 million racial justice fund, Channel 4 committed to being an “anti-racist” organisation and ITV said it would increase its diversity both on and off camera.

Meanwhile, the BBC announced it would be investing £100 million of its TV budget over a three-year period to

produce “diverse and inclusive content”. As a result, there was an increase in ethnic minority representation both on television and behind the camera.

A survey of the top 500 TV adverts published last year by the marketing agency Tapestry found the proportion of ads featuring black people jumped from 37 per cent in 2020 to 51 per cent in 2022. This figure significantly exceeds the numbers of black people represented in the general population in England and Wales, which the 2021 census says stands at about 4 per cent.

Laure Bakare, the author and arts and

culture correspondent for The Guardian, told the BBC last year that he had spoken to figures in the TV industry who said more recently that “things have arguably gone backwards” for ethnic minorities since the BLM movement.

Paul Moore, the chairman of the Creative Diversity Network, which compiles the annual Diamond reports, said: “Concerningly, we have lost momentum for increasing representation of black creatives off-screen following the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, with black representation even declining in some areas.”



'Fairytale' font sent to Gordonstoun for Charles's delight

A Norman font described as looking "like something out of an Arthurian legend" was moved from a "fairytale" chapel in Shropshire to the King's school in Scotland at the request of Prince Philip (Kate Mansey writes).

When Charles attended Gordonstoun boarding school in 1962, his father arranged for the 12th-century font to be sent there so that his son could be "surrounded by ancient objects of beauty".

The large stone tub font, which has ornate carvings on the outside and a lead-lined interior, has since been returned to its original location at St Michael's Church in the hamlet of Upton Cressett, Shropshire.

However, the reason

why the "Gordonstoun font" was relocated from what was a dilapidated English chapel to the prince's Scottish boarding school has only now come to light.

William Cash, whose parents moved to Upton Cressett estate, where the grade I listed church is situated, in the 1970s, said Philip ordered that the font be moved after visiting St Michael's, which was in desperate need of repair, and hearing that it was to be locked and its contents put in storage.

Cash said: "Prince Philip apparently said [of the font], 'I think that would be really good if it was moved to Gordonstoun, because I want my son to be surrounded by ancient objects of English beauty'."

"I think Philip



thought, 'What a waste to have it just sitting in a storage unit'. It's quite large — how they got it up to Gordonstoun I really do not know. This is a strange story that to this day most people don't know about."

It is understood that the late Duke of Edinburgh first saw the

font while visiting St Michael's in the 1960s with Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, a former MP who had been working with him on a scheme to protect unused historic church buildings.

St Michael's had fallen out of use in 1958 and was selected so that Philip could see an

Charles with his father Prince Philip on his first day at Gordonstoun in 1962. The Norman font was returned to St Michael's Church, above left, in the Seventies



example of a dilapidated country church in need of rescue.

Bulmer-Lewis went on to set up the Redundant Churches Fund, which later became the Churches Conservation Trust, of which Charles is now the patron.

The font was moved to Gordonstoun and stood in the chapel, Michael Kirk, during Charles's school years before its return to Upton Cressett in the 1970s.

Cash said visitors to the church were "flabbergasted" when they learnt of the font's royal connections.

He said "It always feels like something out of an Arthurian legend, like this was a font that was fit for a king, a Norman font with roots going back to the age of William the Conqueror."

Steve Tarling, a community officer at the Churches Conservation Trust, which now looks after St Michael's,

described the church as "a really lovely, picturesque, almost 'fairytale' chapel". "You could imagine someone out of the Brothers Grimm having a wedding in there," he said.

Prince Philip was one of the first pupils at Gordonstoun, which was founded by Kurt Hahn, a Jewish educator who fled Nazi Germany.

A 'super-university' first as Kent and Greenwich merge

Georgia Lambert

The University of Greenwich and the University of Kent have completed the UK's first "super-university" merger, creating a higher education group designed to strengthen the two institutions while allowing them to retain their separate identities.

The newly formed London and South East University Group (Lase) has become a legal entity, after almost a year of planning since the two universities announced their intention to explore a merger in September. The official launch will take place on September 7, the anniversary of the announcement.

The news was welcomed by the Department for Education and the industry group Universities UK as an example of innovative collaboration in response to financial pressures.

The move creates the third-largest university in the country, bringing together more than 50,000 students across four campuses in Greenwich and Avery Hill in southeast London, and Medway and Canterbury in Kent.

The Open University and University College London are the largest.

Unlike traditional university mergers, Lase has been designed as a model that allows both universities to continue operating under their own names.

Students will continue to apply to, study at and graduate from either the University of Greenwich or the University of Kent.

There will be no change for students, although the group said the structure could create greater opportunities over time, such as for other universities to join it and provide greater resilience to continue investing in the student experience.

The universities said their merger could provide a "blueprint" for others. In May, King's College London and the Bedford-based Cranfield University announced plans to merge next August.

Professor Jane Harrington, the vice-chancellor of Greenwich, has been appointed founding vice-chancellor and chief executive of Lase.

Professor Georgina Randsley de Moura, the acting vice-chancellor of Kent, will become senior deputy vice-



Georgina Randsley de Moura, left, and Jane Harrington will lead the university

chancellor and deputy chief executive. Harrington said: "I am absolutely delighted to confirm the launch of the new Lase University Group, and I look forward to working with colleagues and with students at the University of Kent and the University of Greenwich."

"A massive thank-you to everyone who has been involved in getting us to this point. There has been tireless work over the last year working to an ambitious timetable and developing a new university model that has never been done before. It means we are starting

with a smooth transition, an extremely strong senior executive team and clear direction so that we can fulfil our potential as the UK's first super-university."

"We are looking forward to the official launch of Lase next month, so we will have much more to say then — and watch this space for a truly spectacular launch to mark the moment."

The University of Kent recorded a £31 million deficit in the 2023–24 academic year and had carried out job cuts and course closures as part of efforts to improve its financial sustainability.

It has cut jobs and closed courses in an attempt to stem its losses and has faced strikes from academics.

However, a Lase spokesman said the institution had taken steps to improve its outlook, adding that the merger should not be viewed as a move to save it, but as a partnership between two universities designed to strengthen both institutions.

The universities previously said that their collaboration would be a trailblazing model, creating a blueprint for other institutions to follow.

Royal scoop: Queen backs young writers

Kate Mansey Assistant Editor

The Queen is backing a new award to help young journalists become the "stars of the future" by offering a package of financial and mentoring support.

Named in her honour, the Queen Camilla Future of Journalism Awards will give journalists aged 18 to 30 the chance to win up to £2,500 each as part of a career development scheme.

The money will be awarded each year to 25 journalists. The scheme will be run through the Journalists' Charity, of which the Queen, 79, is patron.

Her spokesman said: "The Queen hopes these new awards will play a part in assisting those who aspire to a career in the media but who may be deterred by the financial barriers."

James Brindle, of the Journalists' Charity, said: "The awards will make a real difference every year, giving the stars of the future the tools they need."

Applications are open throughout this month and the winners will be announced next month. Candidates must demonstrate a commitment to journalism and explain how a financial award would help their career.

Wildfires suggest rewilding needs a rethink

Libby Purves

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Comment

Class still rules: it's time to break the barriers

I empathise with Andy Burnham's class-conscious Cambridge years — our society's strictures are holding Britain back

Matthew Parris



Born and brought up far from these shores, I was conscious (in what was then Rhodesia) of being part of a smallish white community living among an enormous black population. "Among"? Perhaps "alongside" expresses it better. We hardly knew them. Black Africans' lives were far from ours. There was a chasm. It did feel odd.

Aged 19 I returned to my own country, to university. Here in Britain (I thought as I boarded a train to Cambridge) one would be part of a huge population who would all be my people. Some richer, some poorer, some better educated than others, but all my own kind. At last, I thought, the feeling of being surrounded by millions who were nothing like me and my friends would be banished.

It was not so. I was about to encounter the English class system. Though I spoke (approximately) the same language as my college bedmaker, the college porters and the youths from the town who waited on us at dinner in hall, and though it has always been my habit to be on the friendliest possible terms with all manner of people, there was no escaping how slight were the areas of convergence between their worlds, their interests and passions, their knowledge, and mine. They knew what they knew. My friends and I knew what we knew.

I was beginning to recognise again my Rhodesian boyhood.

And gradually, as my ear for accent became fine-tuned to the social markers of class, I became attuned

too to the faint hints of, if not quite hostility, then condescension downward; and upward, a certain guarded resentment towards a class that thought ourselves the "betters" of those socially beneath us. The metaphor (and it's only metaphor) of "upper" and "lower", as well as words like "common" and "ordinary", attested to an undeclared ranking of worth; perhaps a hint, hanging ever so lightly in the air, of friction.

"Working class", in a Britain where today every social class works, has become a euphemism for all that.

As (partly through Cambridge) I secured my own class anchorage, and prospered, and moved to London, I found myself in a world where you can know a substantial proportion of those whom your friends also know. You all keep bumping into each other. And this in a city of some nine million people. It sometimes feels as though my friends, their friends and I number just a few thousand souls

Politicians seem afraid to admit to upper or middle-class origins

moving among hordes of hologram people generated by AI to create a plausible backdrop to our world.

I hate the chasm. I did in Rhodesia, I did at Cambridge, and I do now. But I acknowledge it. If you, Times reader, don't, that may be because you are so completely immersed in it you can't even see it. "What do they know of England, who only England know?"

Tom Peck's politician sketches for our paper are brilliant. His sketch about Andy Burnham's claimed "impostor syndrome" at Cambridge was spot-on in its contempt for today's fashion for parading (or

inventing) working-class origins. But I did think Tom a bit harsh. None of us, from the King downwards, believes we got where we are without trying. And yes, we did try. But we may forget that just by being born into the class we inhabit we were halfway there already. Mr Burnham wasn't.

Like Tom (I suspect) I find the glorification of "working people" as stupid and infuriating as the self-regard of the posh; but is "Burnham the awkward kid from the wrong side of the tracks" inconsistent with his also having loved and benefited from Cambridge? Like all of us, no doubt, he accentuates the part of his story that suits his audience. The hint of a chip on the shoulder is how you get votes from tens of millions who may feel a bit overlooked.

And one has to ask why. If a new prime minister (like the last one) sees advantage in boasting about his working-class origins (remember son-of-a-toolmaker Keir; Rishi Sunak as son-of-a-humble-chemist; David Cameron's hilarious discovery that he was an avid football supporter; Margaret Thatcher's banging on about living above a shop; or John Major's genuine scramble to Downing Street from shared rooms in Brixton) ... if these are positives on a prime-ministerial CV then what is it about our democracy that induces nervousness in politicians about upper or even middle-class origins?

I think it's because we're maybe unconsciously aware (in the words of the old cartoon) that the natives are restless. Harold Macmillan was able actually to exaggerate his poshness because he could tell the masses (gently mocking the vernacular) that they'd "never had it so good". Nor had they. No prime minister can say that now. Even a modest tax giveaway to pubs must be described (as Burnham does) as relief for a



Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion* reflected GB Shaw's views on accent and class

"working class" institution. He is trading, however delicately, on class resentment — and even, in some quarters, class hatred. Perhaps, instead of lamenting this we should ask ourselves why a modern British politician can.

As I write I can feel a rising irritation among some readers. "Nobody today," you may protest, "is prevented from moving 'up' from the working class." Indeed not. Millions have. And there's national admiration for those who, like Burnham, make what we see as the escape. I acknowledge that. But they do it with the wind, even from their own class, against them, and there are rivers they have to cross. A world of unspoken categorisation must be navigated.

The language of "upwards", meanwhile, suggests clawing one's

way up a ladder from some kind of pit — or being plucked up by a rescue helicopter. That the metaphor has truth to it is a melancholy fact. As a newly elected Tory MP my first of very few rebellions was against the "assisted places" scheme to helicopter clever kids out of comprehensive schools into superior "grant maintained" schools. I now think I was wrong. But the state should not need helicopters.

My first rebellion was against assisted places — I think I was wrong

Helicopters suggest a place from which escape is otherwise difficult. Class generates that.

It's 114 years since, in his preface to *Pygmalion* and speaking of language, accent and social class, GB Shaw wrote: "It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him." The assumptions we can quite accurately make as soon as we hear a fellow citizen speak are class assumptions. Thus we, be it complaining about the servants in our white Rhodesian citadel or mocking John Major's accent at our London dinner party, deprive our country of the talents and energies of millions. How many thousands are we holding back, for every handful that make it through? Helicopters be damned: how can we smash down those walls?

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Comment

Let's rekindle capitalism with a conscience

Britain's pioneering Quaker businesses showed that success and social good can work together

Tony Sewell



According to this year's Legatum Prosperity Index, Switzerland is the most prosperous country in the world. The Swiss traditions of decentralised government, local democracy and a resolutely pro-enterprise business environment make a winning combination. The country excels at economic freedom, is exceptionally peaceful and enjoys high levels of social cohesion. Swiss health and education are world leading.

Second and third in the index are Norway and Ireland. The United States comes 17th and the UK 18th.

Why can't Britain, with its history of enterprise, be in the top ten? Sadly, we have convinced ourselves through a Protestant form of guilt that making money is evil. We think you can't have social stability alongside great wealth. It is interesting how tongue-tied Andy Burnham becomes when he tries to link social responsibility and capitalism. It is literally gut wrenching for him to say the "C" word. Delivering his opening salvo as prime minister, he began to dance on the grave of Margaret Thatcher. The 1980s was a period when "Britain took some wrong turns", and many parts of the country were still feeling the effects of decline today.

We cannot land all our economic

problems on the Thatcher years but we can see that our welfare bill, mass immigration and anti-business culture put us well below Switzerland. We have forgotten one of our great legacies. In the smoky, unforgiving landscape of 19th-century industry, where factory conditions were often brutal and workers' lives cheap, a small religious minority quietly built successful companies on entirely different principles. Cadbury, Rowntree, Fry's and Clarks were experiments in what we might now call "social capitalism" — the idea that profit and moral responsibility to workers, communities and society need not be at odds.

All these firms were founded by

Bournville was built to give workers decent housing and clean air

Quakers. This was not incidental. Quakerism placed enormous emphasis on simplicity, honesty, equality and stewardship — the belief that wealth was a trust to be used responsibly rather than a personal indulgence. For much of British history, Quakers were barred from university education, the professions and public office because they refused to swear oaths or conform to the Church of England. Business became one of the few avenues open to them.

Their reputation for scrupulous honesty in trade — fixed, fair prices instead of haggling, accurate weights and measures — made Quaker firms trusted well beyond their own community. That trust became a

genuine commercial asset but it flowed from religious conviction rather than marketing strategy.

John Cadbury opened his Birmingham shop in 1824 and the firm flourished under his sons Richard and George Cadbury. George became perhaps the most famous exponent of what he called "prosperity sharing". In 1879, the company moved its factory out of central Birmingham to a greenfield site and built Bournville, a model village designed to give workers decent housing, gardens, parks and clean air — a deliberate rejection of the slum conditions common near most factories of the era.

Cadbury provided a works doctor and dentist, swimming pools, education classes and one of the earliest occupational pension schemes. Employees had access to sports clubs and adult education, reflecting the Quaker belief in the "whole person" — that a worker's wellbeing extended far beyond the hours spent on the factory floor.

Joseph Rowntree built a rival cocoa and confectionery empire in York but is remembered as much for his social investigations. His son, Seeborn Rowntree, conducted pioneering studies of poverty and the findings shaped company policy: better wages, sick pay, a pension fund and — echoing Bournville — the model village of New Earswick. The three charitable trusts established by Joseph persist today, explicitly designed to fund social research and reform rather than simply charitable relief. JS Fry & Sons, the oldest of the great chocolate houses, shared the same broad instincts towards worker

welfare, education and temperance. Away from confectionery, the Clark family of Street, Somerset, built C&J Clark on similar lines. I remember as a mid-1960s child being taken by my mother to undertake a great British ritual before starting a new school year: the trip to get a new pair of Clarks shoes. This great product was indeed the sole of a nation.

These companies were the first devolutionists, pioneering a workplace relationship decades before labour law or the welfare state caught up. Unlike Burnham's approach, it was not driven by centralised dictates or city politics. This levelling-up was made by private enterprise, based on a unique intersection of capitalism, social good and moral fervour. It transformed communities by creating wealth, jobs and a social contract with the community. Surely Google, Amazon and local public enterprises can learn from our rich legacy.

It was also a world away from the obsession with diversity equality and inclusion based on race and gender. What about real investment in the lives of working-class people, not their sexuality? We need to be less sneering about the Victorians; they found a way to become the workshop of the world and fight injustice. They had what Simon Heffer calls in his book *High Minds*, the ability to translate idealism into reality. Their example remains a touchstone for anyone arguing that commercial success and social conscience are not just compatible but can genuinely reinforce one another.

Lord Sewell of Sanderstead is a Conservative peer



We need a way to support councils to reopen care homes

Mark Piggott

Like the new prime minister, I am the 50-something child of a parent with Alzheimer's. She received her diagnosis in 2019, aged 71, the year she moved from a rented property into sheltered housing.

Mum was in Yorkshire; I am in London. To ensure she retained some independence we arranged daily visits from the council. As visits increased to two then three times daily, the fees increased to about £550 a month, almost matching what she received from a private pension. I found myself heading north more frequently, often at short notice following the latest crisis. I was twice hospitalised with stress, and turned the experience into a novel.

In 2022, when Mum had a fall in the street, developed Covid-19 in hospital and was deemed too vulnerable to live alone, she was moved to a private care home. There, having just received a modest inheritance, she became liable for the whole cost of her care. In the past five years, we have spent £90,000 of Mum's savings and pensions on the care she requires.

The social care crisis, which Baroness Casey of Blackstock is investigating, isn't just a crisis for families but for taxpayers as a whole. Mum's contribution to her annual care costs are about £18,000 — and the local authority pays a larger share, funded by council taxpayers. As the number of council-owned care homes has been decreasing for decades, much of this goes directly to private care operators.

In 1979, 64 per cent of residential and nursing home beds were provided by local authorities or the NHS, according to the London School of Economics. By 2012 it was 6 per cent. For domiciliary care the decline has been even sharper, from 95 per cent directly provided by councils in 1993 to 11 per cent in 2012. We need Casey to find a way to support councils to reopen care homes that keep billions of pounds in the system rather than private hands.

We consider ourselves fortunate. Mum is now in a private care home on the south coast and we are able to visit regularly. She has lived for seven years with the "condition", allowing her to spend time with her grandchildren. But she requires 24-hour care, her seizures are becoming more frequent and she is almost catatonic. A bright, vivacious woman who experienced homelessness, poverty and abusive men to become a dance teacher, she would have hated to see herself like this.

This is what Alzheimer's does to you and your family. If the prime minister can help families like mine, and begin to tackle the iniquities of social care, he may even cement some sort of legacy.

Mark Piggott's Jam Generation is published by Provoco

Will Pavia Notebook

For a peek into Trump's mind, brush up on Mac B

We're walking along a Manhattan street, the kids and I, when the small one spots a CCTV camera. "Do you think Trump can see us?" he asks.

It's always interesting to hear the children speak of the president because, apart from their belief that he watches CCTV footage of East 92nd Street, it always feels as if they get him. He is like a character from one of their books, specifically *Mac B*, *Kid Spy* by Mac Barnett. In the series it is 1989 and the protagonist, a child in California, is telephoned by the Queen of England who wants him to serve as her secret agent. Usually he is up against "the KGB Man" and assisted by various foreign leaders. "The president of France looked very disappointed in me," our hero tells us. "Later when I saw pictures of him, I realised that he always looked disappointed."

In the books, world leaders are always calling each other up to gossip. It seemed a funny idea, until Trump returned to the White House. "Call Emmanuel," Trump told an aide, according to the Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan book *Regime Change*. "Emmanuel, I'm building an arch," he said. "I'm trying to figure out if I need a viewing deck. Your arch, do you have a viewing platform?" "Yes," said President Macron. After more questions about whether people throw bottles off the Arc de Triomphe, Trump hung up. None of this would surprise my children. Once, to comprehend the affairs of princes, you studied Machiavelli. Now you need to read *Mac B*.

Hair-raising

There is one thing the seven-year-old still doesn't understand about Trump, however, and that is his hair. "I have read that he combs it in from the sides," I tell him. "Then he combs it back and sprays it."

"He probably gets his butlers to do it," he replies. "No," I say. "I think he

does it himself."

"He does it?" The little guy is astonished. "Really?"

His older brother nods sagely and says: "That's why it looks so bad."

Jackie's Odyssey

The cinemas here have been packed for *The Odyssey*. The New Yorkers I saw it with were uncharacteristically quiet as the title frame appeared. Then a man shouted: "OK! Let's go!" We watched the crew entering the hut of Circe the witch, the camera lingering on piles of armour outside. "Uh oh!" said a guy near me. There was laughter when a suitor recognised

Odysseus, the realisation striking him just before the arrow.

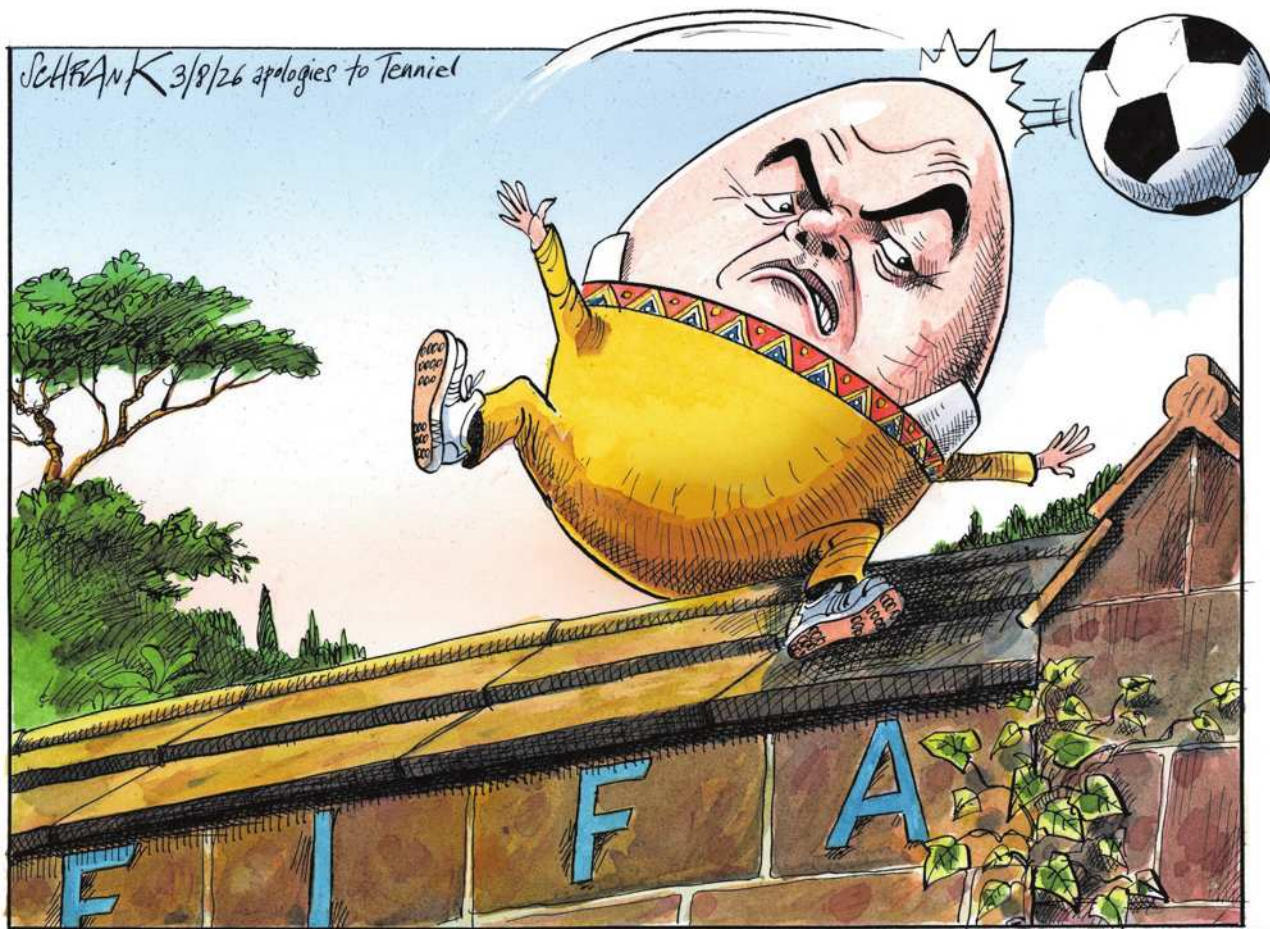
In the afterglow of Christopher Nolan's film, as all things ancient and Greek seemed new again, I was looking through the transcript of an interview I did a few years ago with the musician Carly Simon. She told me that Jackie Kennedy Onassis, her friend, made a handwritten copy of the *Odyssey* for her second husband, Aristotle Onassis,

filling it with ink drawings of him as Odysseus. He was away a lot, for business and, apparently, a fair bit of philandering; meanwhile Jackie O worked over the book like Penelope at the loom, drawing her husband wending his way back to her through storms and Sirens.

Homeward bound

I am coming home too, after 16 years adrift in New York City. When I tell my fellow New Yorkers, they say politely that I'll be missed. When my wife says she is leaving, people have terrible breakdowns in the street. But you should see the weeping and rending of garments for our smallest child. I think it is because he is the nearest, of any of us, to the showy spirit of New York. The moment we told him we were leaving, he announced it to his second-grade class, like a total diva. His classmates and teachers made him a book, not as long as Jackie O's for Aristotle, but still it is quite something. "Go to London and be yourself, show them how New Yorkers do it!" writes Miss Amber. "You got this! Always remember Miss Amber got your back!" I used to think that all this time in New York City would turn me into a New Yorker, the kind of person who would shout: "OK, let's go!" in a silent cinema. It hasn't happened. But I'm bringing one home with me.





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Wildfires suggest rewilding needs a rethink

Green enthusiasm for ignoring the old-fashioned thinning and clearing of land does create habitats — and kindling

Libby Purves



@LIB_THINKS

On Wednesday afternoon two women smelt smoke below a path at Minsmere nature reserve. They tried briefly to stamp the crackling ground with beach shoes, then raised the alarm. By nightfall the rare and precious Dunwich heath was aflame. Six miles away we saw smoke whiten, and hoped for the best. But winds shifted unpredictably through Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Homes, caravans and campsites were evacuated, refuge taken at Westleton village hall. Fire crews laboured, a helicopter scooped seawater, 1,000 litres at a time, to drop on the burning land.

Crews from as far as Yorkshire came to help Suffolk's full-time and retained firefighters. Only on Friday could the police escort evacuees back briefly to collect possessions and cars. The area remains closed. Yesterday it was only dubbed "stable", small fires being dealt with.

It's bleak. We lived for 15 years on the edge of that heath; our former house has only just survived. The fire

service's protection of property, even caravans, was remarkable. Still more remarkable is that they stopped it crossing the road to torch acres of equally tinder-dry woods. But there's grief in the wound to beauty and wildlife on a "national landscape" already ravaged by acres of concrete for Sizewell C preparations, sprawling solar farms and impending National Grid projects. A wound, a blow to local morale and tourism businesses.

At least the Blitz spirit of community is strong: Red Cross, Salvation Army and other groups stepped up, search-and-rescue volunteers flew drones to help monitoring, businesses brought help and food, locals housed dispossessed neighbours and holidaymakers (one family fresh from fleeing the French wildfires). Farmers brought machinery to cut and dig firebreaks. Suffolk works well.

Now talk along this troubled coast turns to prevention and preparation, both personal and general. Our own village is surrounded by a cracklingly dry bracken and gorse common, and some of us are toying with Nordic-style civil defence preparedness. What would you grab: phone, passport, pills, water? The evacuated couple we housed on Thursday night (their home now luckily fine) had seized family photos and memory boxes, one younger member managing to chuck a cherished

armful from the wardrobe into the car.

As to prevention, here a firework event is cancelled and, after some effort and persuasion, campsites have banned fires, barbecues and lanterns. But yesterday some fools lit a beach campfire a few feet upwind from dry marram grass and bridled at any challenge. One local called police, was passed to fire brigade and coastguard, but learnt that nothing can happen until disaster does.

Everyone wants more warning signposts. A 98-year-old Blitz veteran speaks of a firewatch, though this

These quiet heroes need time off to train. Not all bosses like that

being Suffolk it's hard to find anything high enough to watch from, apart from the terrifying ladder up the church tower. Older people remember how it was once normal to have a few "beaters" — rubber mats on sticks — stacked around heathland areas so anyone who saw smouldering could quell it with robust rural sense. Research suggests that alas, like so much trust in the citizenry, this kind of provision is seen to "put untrained members of the public at risk" and cause vandalism. Swatters must be

"securely on site in locked depots for trained personnel".

Go wider on the theme of preparedness and notice that we have a national shortage of retained "on-call" firefighters. The Local Government Association found last year that three quarters of services have difficulty finding and retaining enough of these part-time staff, who live or work near a fire station and are fit and ready for emergencies. Overall they provide fire cover for about 90 per cent of the country. Recent decline is ascribed not only to the rise in long-distance commuting and second jobs but also "employer resistance". Like territorialists, these quiet heroes need time off for training but their call-ups are more abrupt. Not all bosses like that.

Talk also turns to land husbandry. Old-fashioned thinning and clearing and occasional "cool fires" — small deliberate burnings, still common in Australia and once here — are out of fashion. The green enthusiasm for "rewilding", to provide habitat for species from beetles to birds, has often meant leaving underbrush, fallen and overgrown vegetation alone. These are indeed habitats but they are also very efficient kindling. It need not even be carelessness: a lightning strike or sun through discarded glass can trigger disaster. Here, the oil-based pine and lavender proved particularly fast-burning.

And this fire began on RSPB land and devastated a National Trust heath. Dr Thomas Smith, an environmental geographer at the London School of Economics, mourned "a naivety in some people's ideas of rewilding". Talking of heathland further north, the Countryside Alliance says failure to manage vegetation "because of political ideology or ... rewilding is completely irresponsible". It's about firebreaks, cool fires, active thinning management. In Europe the EU has, after a long delay, unveiled a wildfire strategy. It similarly deplores unmanaged forestry and abandoned or rewilded farmland.

There's a tug of regret, of course. Too much of Britain is already concrete and brick, too little is wild. Gerard Manley Hopkins cried: "O let them be left, wildness and wet/ Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet!" But it isn't always wet now. And while love of unruly vegetation and its inhabitants is honourable, wildfires do no favours to them any more than to us. Regeneration at Dunwich will take years.

But nature teaches realism, and dogged persistence too. One of our retained firemen told his mother that on the last of his three nights, standing amid the blackened landscape feeling heat still coming up through his boots, he and his comrades were suddenly stilled by one sound. It was a nightjar.

Letters to the Editor



UK should bid for 2038 World Cup

Sir, As we recover from the recent World Cup and Gianni Infantino's attempt to sell off part of Fifa to a Trump-linked private equity company (letters, Aug 1), what better time for England — or Britain and Ireland — to put in a bid to host the 2038 World Cup? The 2030 Cup is already lost to a group of six countries on three continents. This has been designed for Infantino to claim that these three continents have hosted recent finals, leaving Saudi Arabia to get the 2034 World Cup unopposed.

The public outcry against Infantino's sale plan shows that there is still strong support for the "basics" of football. A UK bid right now would set a high bar for others to challenge. And if Andy Burnham announces it with a commitment that he will ask the FA to locate the bulk of the matches in the north of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, he will be giving a good example of how he plans to shift the focus towards the regions that have been overlooked for so long.

Charles Enoch
Twickenham

Sir, Matthew Syed has noted that the disgraceful behaviour of the Argentinian football team had done something which nobody believed possible and united the world — against them. Now, Gianni Infantino has managed a second impossibility. He has made his predecessor, Sepp Blatter, look like a model of probity.

Alec Gallagher

Potton, Beds

Outstanding care

Sir, Janice Turner hit the nail on the head in her comparison between lavish and basic care homes ("Get ready to pay for the care we'll all need", Aug 1). My godmother lived for nine years in a "basic" home where she was looked after by thoughtful, committed and caring staff, many of whom were there on day one and still there when she died, and attended her funeral. It's the quality of the (sadly underpaid) staff, not the "baubles", which makes a care home outstanding.

Lawrence McVeigh
Rochester, Kent

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Corrections and clarifications

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Burnham's faith and northern Catholicism

Sir, Lord Glasman reminds us of the roots of the Labour tradition, as reflected in the party's new leader ("Burnham's faith in tradition might save Labour", Aug 1). He eloquently describes the Labour Party's non-conformist and Roman Catholic traditions built around the dignity of home, family, work and place. Not so long ago the Church of England was described as the "Tory party at prayer". Christianity fulfilled a spiritual longing within the human condition and sits in contrast to the managerial, legalistic and process-driven ethos of previous governments which probably contributed to the unpopularity of Sir Keir Starmer. We should be grateful to have a prime minister who embraces his roots within the Roman Catholic Church. It is a pity that the Church of England has vacated this vital space in national life in its rush to managerialism and virtue-signalling.

Simon Edwards
Sarremezan, France

Sir, Lord Glasman's reflections on the influence of Roman Catholic social teaching, as articulated by Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool, on our new prime minister are timely.

AI and peer reviews

Sir, One of the problems with the academic peer-review process is that it can take years before publications reach the academic community. This is incompatible with the speed of advance of AI ("When AI helps trolls to hype Hitler, historians stand no chance", Weekend essay, Aug 1). In the past year I have listened to two papers from academics claiming that guardrails in modern AI models do not permit prompts on Hitler or the Holocaust. As Niall Ferguson says, this is no longer the case.

Dr Anthony Harris
Emmanuel College, Cambridge

Jersey's jurors

Sir, Some years ago I was an expert witness in Jersey, where the structure of the legal profession reflects the French historical background ("Rethink of Lammy's plans to restrict jury trials", Aug 1). Jersey has advocates rather than barristers. The position of the bailiff, the civic head of the island, and the role of jurors date from the 14th century. Jurats are

However, it was Michael Heseltine, as minister for Merseyside in Margaret Thatcher's government, who turned the tide with Liverpool's renewal in the 1980s. The International Garden Festival, the Royal Albert Dock development, new buildings in Toxteth and on the south side of the Anglican cathedral, and the Eldonian Village project in inner-city Vauxhall all came into being and helped save Liverpool's morale and economy because of Heseltine's One Nation Conservatism.

The Very Rev Dr John Davies
Curate, Liverpool Parish Church, 1984-87; Christchurch, Glos

Sir, One word is missing from Lord Glasman's article — women. I still can't forget in my younger Labour Party days the mobilisation by male bishops to deny women in Britain the right to have a say over their own fertility. Women are also not allowed to take a full part in celebrating Mass. The Vatican insists that to be considered a "practising Catholic" you have to attend weekly Mass as a minimum. I worked 15 years with European trade unions who know all about Pope Leo XIII's 1891 *Rerum Novarum* encyclical, worker priests and the Church's support for the right

of workers to form unions as well as the duty of employers to treat workers fairly — Catholic social teaching ideas that were anathema to that staunch Church of England prime minister, Margaret Thatcher. However, Alastair Campbell was right when he stopped a journalist talking to the Mass-going prime minister Tony Blair about faith with the injunction "We don't do God!" The New Testament tells us about the difference between Caesar and God. As a Labour cradle Catholic and retired altar boy I would urge Andy Burnham not to play the faith card.

Dr Denis MacShane

London SW1

Sir, Lord Glasman's article made me aware that I no longer feel cynical about our leaders. Andy Burnham, Kemi Badenoch and Sir Keir Starmer all come across as genuine people of goodwill, motivated by more than personal ambition, even if they are not equals when it comes to political nous or the ability to get things done. For me throwing off the shackles of never-ending cynicism has brought unexpected relief. Long may it last!

Henry Scrope
Shipton by Beningbrough, York

unpaid lay people who have been elected by an electoral college and replace a jury. My view is that this would reduce miscarriages of justice. Jury members might be in a hurry to pick up children from school, or to return to the office, or simply let their attention drift to their own worries.

Professor Michael Baum

Professor emeritus of surgery, University College London

Humane traps

Sir, I am surprised that Nigel Farndale (Notebook, Jul 31) thinks trapping a mouse, then releasing it away from its usual food sources and places of shelter, is humane; it will often result in its early death. It would be kinder if he blocked access to his house, got a cat to discourage the mice or invested in high-quality traditional snap traps. "Humane" traps are an example of humans taking the easy way out in our approach to wildlife.

Jane Kaye
Maidenhead, Berks

Sir, I used humane traps regularly when I had frequent mouse visitors.

Peanut butter worked well to entice them into the trap, and then I would set them free a mile or two away. But I felt the mice were somehow finding their way back. Perhaps it was for the peanut butter? Later I realised new generations of mice were making their way into my house via my electricity meter. When the filler around the wires was replaced, there were no more mice. I missed them.

Barbara Curry
Winchcombe, Glos

Bat out of hell

Sir, Jim Dixon's Nature Notebook (Aug 1) reminded me of when a bat came in through a skylight in our house. It spiralled down our staircase and back up again, heading straight for me. While I cowered, my wife found a sheet in the wardrobe and held it out. The bat landed on it and she folded it in and took the sheet outside, then opened it up again. The bat flew off. I thoroughly approved of this approach but somehow, in all the excitement, forgot to download an app to listen in and confirm the species.

John Taylor
Sherburn in Elmet, N Yorks

BRIGHTON'S BANK HOLIDAY BONANZA

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 3, 1926

This has been a year of sunny bank holidays. Easter Monday had blue skies and a summer temperature. Whit Monday was equally warm and fine. Yesterday began without a cloud, and the sun shone from dawn to early evening. South coast resorts, where in July hotels and boarding houses had received very disappointing numbers of guests, were booked up by Saturday night, and at Brighton, Southend and other places many people failed to find accommodation and had to sleep in cinema theatres, on the beach or in motor-cars.

Following on the weekend departures from London huge numbers of holiday-makers set out in the morning for one-day excursions by rail, road or steamer. The motor traffic on the Surrey roads was not quite so heavy as in Whit week, but between 8 and 11 o'clock steady processions of cars rolled along the highways, towards Brighton or tree-covered hills which offered shady spots for picnic meals. The country is very beautiful for the time of the year. Woods and hedgerows and meadows are a brighter green than is usual in August; red poppies show among the ripening corn and, near to the streams, creamy tufts of meadowsweet fill the air with fragrance. On Hampshire heaths and Surrey uplands the heather is in bloom.

The London commons are favourite recreation grounds for people who are content to spend a bank holiday within easy reach of

their homes, and with cricket matches, lawn tennis and other games to watch large numbers enjoyed the day quietly at little or no cost on these unique open spaces. Hampstead Heath at normal times has the best characteristics of the commons, but on bank holidays it becomes a fairground and quiet is banished by the discord of competing jazz tones blared from the brass mouths of "organs" attached to merry-go-rounds and by the noisy revelry of the multitude.

Holiday visitors to the central parts of London were numerous. It had been announced that the new signalling system by coloured lights at the eastern end of Piccadilly would be put into operation, but there was so little traffic for the constables on point duty to regulate that the lights were not required.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Dearth of rain

Sir, Perhaps Andy Burnham should appoint a minister for drought ("Call for tougher laws on barbecues and bonfires", Jul 31). Denis Howell was appointed in the fabled long hot summer of 1976 and soon earned the revised sobriquet of minister for rain.

Prue Seddon
Toys Hill, Kent

Sir, In 1922 AP Herbert wrote: "The Farmer will never be happy again/ He carries his heart in his boots; For either the rain is destroying his grain/ Or the drought is destroying his roots." Plus ça change. However, Britain is surrounded by water. Some have argued long but perhaps not loudly enough that desalination is part of the answer to water shortages.

Mark Pyper
Oxford

Dunwich wildfire

Sir, The Dunwich Heath fire ("I saw Suffolk fire spread like fury. The noise was horrible", Aug 1) is another blow to an area that has already lost more than 40,000 trees, miles of hedgerow and much wildlife owing to the Sizewell development. There are many birds on the red list on this part of the Suffolk coast. Nature can only take so much before the damage becomes impossible to reverse. The energy companies and government should consider the impact on our environment and wildlife.

Alexandra Langdon
Aldeburgh, Suffolk

Spirit of the game

Sir, Steve James claims cricket is a mass of grey areas when it comes to what is acceptable ("Clicky" fell foul of nebulous spirit — but what is cheating?", Aug 1). However, "when you know you know" describes perfectly the sportsman's dilemma — how far to go to win. Sharp elbows, playing to win and extreme competitiveness are acceptable if they comply with rules and laws, but the protagonist invariably knows if they have crossed the line. Sadly, as the Clicky Ponting affair demonstrates, it seems standards in sport and life are moving in the wrong direction.

Hugh Cooper

York

Help with puzzles

Sir, Mick Hodgkin's column on using reference books to help with crosswords (Feedback, Aug 1) reminded me of when I began teaching maths in the 1970s and calculators started to appear. We met to discuss whether such aids should be allowed in exams. My head of department said he would like to have been at the meeting that discussed whether using log tables was allowed.

Gwyn Evans
Aberdare, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Lies, damned lies

Sir, Giles Coren's admissions of fibbing (Comment, Aug 1) reminded me of a dear friend who lied unstintingly on an application form. At the interview, when they asked about the skydiving and being a concert pianist, she confessed it was to get her into the room. They asked why they should employ her. "I'm kind to animals" was all she could think of. She worked there until her retirement.

Beryl Whyatt
Welwyn Garden City, Herts

Daily Universal Register

UK: Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann, the All-Ireland Music Festival, continues in Belfast.
US: Palantir and Snap company results.

Nature notes



Weld is a deep-rooted non-native biennial wildflower once prized for the yellow dye that can be extracted from its leaves and seeds.

It is known by many other names, including dyer's rocket, dyer's weed, woad and yellow weed, but should not be confused with dyer's greenweed, aka dyer's broom, which also has yellow flowers and yields a yellow dye, but is a member of the pea family. In summer weld forms tall, upright flower spikes covered in tiny blooms, and these attract pollinators, including yellow-face bees. There are 12 species of yellow-face bees in the British Isles; one, the large yellow-face bee, is an "oligolectic specialist", relying entirely on weld and its close cousin, wild mignonette.

MELISSA HARRISON

Birthdays today



Baroness (Thangam) Debbonaire, pictured, shadow leader of the House of Commons (2021-23), 60; **Ossie Ardiles**, footballer, Argentina (1975-82) and Tottenham Hotspur (1978-88), and manager, 74; **Robert Ayling**, chief executive, British Airways (1996-2000), 80; **Vice-Admiral Paul Bennett**, president, Royal British Legion, Association of Royal Naval Officers, 62; **Steven Berkoff**, actor, *Octopussy* (1983), 89; **Tom Brady**, American football player, seven-time Super Bowl champion, 49; **Jourdan Dunn**, model and actress, *Terminal* (2018), 36; **Stephen Graham**, actor, *Adolescence* (2025), 53; **Sir Nick Harvey**, armed forces minister (2010-12), 65; **James Hetfield**, musician, co-founder of Metallica, 63; **Lindsey Lushum**, international editor, Channel 4 News, 68; **Sir David Holgate**, lord justice of appeal, 70; **Kristo Kaarmann**, businessman, co-founder and chief executive, Wise (global tech company), 46; **Prof Sir John Kay**, economist, *The Corporation in the Twenty-First Century: Why (almost) everything we are told about business is wrong* (2024), 78; **Sir Simon Keenlyside**, baritone, 67; **John Landis**, film director, *National Lampoon's Animal House* (1978), *The Blues Brothers* (1980), 76; **Ryan Lochte**, swimmer, six-time Olympic gold medalist (2004, 2008, 2012, 2016), 42; **Dame Ursula Martin**, computer scientist, 73; **Jimmie Nicol**, drummer, replaced Ringo Starr in the Beatles for eight world concerts in 1964, 87; **Edward Petherbridge**, actor, portrayed Lord Peter Wimsey in TV adaptations of the novels of Dorothy L Sayers, 90; **Jacki Piper**, actress, best known for the Carry On... film series (1970-72), 80; **Masato Sagawa**, scientist, winner of the Queen Elizabeth prize for engineering (2022), 83; **Martin Sheen**, actor, *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *The West Wing* (1999-2006), 86; **Skin** (Deborah Dyer), singer, Skunk Anansie, *Weak* (1995), 59; **Martha Stewart**, US talk show host and businesswoman, 85; **Jack Straw**, former lord chancellor, foreign secretary and home secretary, 80.

On this day

In 1904 British troops entered Lhasa, Tibet, from where the 13th Dalai Lama had fled.

The last word

"The other day, someone told me the difference between a democracy and a people's democracy. It's the same difference between a jacket and a straitjacket." Ronald Reagan speaking at a human rights event (1986)



Data Centre Stage

Britain cannot afford to be left behind by the AI revolution. Building data centres is severely testing the country's ageing infrastructure and inefficient grid

Data centres are the industrial engines of the AI revolution. These vast buildings, housing the computers used by large language models, are springing up all over the developed world. Britain has an estimated 560 data centres — some built several years ago to support cloud computing, and some appearing more recently during the AI revolution. The race to build infrastructure fit for the 21st century, however, is exposing weaknesses in Britain's industrial base. One bottleneck is the inefficiency of the electricity grid. Another is a tangle of regulation that slows planning and deters investment. These issues must be addressed for Britain to live up to its potential.

Industrial energy prices in Britain are crippling — four times those in America. Given that modern AI systems require a large amount of computational power, the cost of energy creates an acute barrier to investment in data centres. The problem is that in Britain the wholesale energy price is set nationally and tends to allow comparatively costly gas-powered plants to act as a "price setter". That pushes up prices, as well as depriving the market of signals: it means industry cannot move to areas where an abundance of energy ought to make production much cheaper. Many industry analysts argue that the grid should move

to a system, like America's, using variable "locational prices". Octopus Energy calculates this switch could save consumers as much as £55 billion by 2050. It could drive down Scotland's energy prices to some of the cheapest in Europe. It would also allow energy-hungry industries to be located closer to where that energy is generated, avoiding inefficient energy transmission.

The electricity grid is also too weak. Ofgem, the energy regulator, proposes to charge developers an upfront fee of as much as £712,500 per megawatt for projects planning to connect to the grid. That is a sensible interim step. At present it can take months or years to connect to the grid — a huge liability in an industry where speed is of the essence. Such frictions are thought to make the lifetime value of a 100-megawatt data centre almost a fifth lower in Britain than in America.

By forcing developers to pay up front, Ofgem is hoping to weed out unserious and speculative planners from among the 315 data centre proposals in the long queue for approval. This measure is, however, ultimately a concession to the underlying weakness of the grid. Britain is unable to meet the demand of the investors courting it. It is estimated that the total electricity capacity required by projects planning to join the grid has

recently increased to as much as 125 gigawatts: almost three times the peak electricity demand last year. Britain's underlying shortage of energy capacity is another bottleneck to be addressed.

As more data centres appear across Britain, other forms of opposition will rear their heads. In America, nimbyist concerns about the pollution and unsightliness caused by data centres have fuelled a political backlash against the technology. The Scottish National Party has recently called for a complete moratorium on the construction of data centres north of the border. Last year, the London Assembly's planning and regeneration committee alleged that data centre construction might be diverting limited grid connectivity and resources away from house-building. It is clear, however, that London will need data centres close at hand, not least to serve the capital's finance sector.

These objections offer an intimation of the political football that will be made of data centres in years to come. Ill-motivated blockers must not be allowed to stop Britain from building infrastructure where there is a sound business case for doing so. Nor should they distract policymakers from addressing the UK's deep structural weaknesses, now so glaringly exposed in the age of AI.

Schools of Thought

Technical and academic education go hand in hand to get young people to work

In the first quarter of this year, the number of young people in Britain not in education, employment or training (Neet) exceeded one million for the first time since 2013. Some 13.5 per cent of 16 to 24-year-olds fell into that category. In today's Times, the new education secretary, Lucy Powell, outlines her determination to get those young people back on the road to success. It is a laudable goal, though the government has only the beginnings of an answer to the challenge.

The centrepiece of Ms Powell's strategy is a renewed focus on creative and technical education for children "whose talents and skills lie beyond academia". Ms Powell argues that the prevalence of Neets is to be laid at the door of Lord Gove of Torrey, her predecessor in 2010-14, who led a programme of reform to instil greater academic focus and rigour in English schools.

Parts of this analysis are clouded by the fog of party politics. The 2010s saw an increase in attainment in reading and maths among English children when measured against international comparators. In the same period, the performance of schoolchildren in Scotland, where the writ

of the Conservative education reforms never ran, declined. Indeed, the experience of Scotland — where Neet rates are also high, and which has been governed by the Scottish National Party since 2007 — belies Ms Powell's suggestion that the Neet question is the legacy of Conservative education policy.

In that context, it is not wholly reassuring to hear the education secretary bemoan a historic "over-focus on academic attainment", as she did in comments last week. Academic attainment is important. Strengthening technical education should certainly never mean writing a teenager off as unacademic. Everyone needs to be taught to add up.

Ms Powell is on much stronger ground when she argues, as she does in today's newspaper, that academic and technical education should not be seen as rivals competing for status at all. Rather, they should be complementary components of a modern school education. The boundary between the two is, in any case, becoming more porous. The government has suggested, for example, that pupils should be able to study technical courses in

subjects such as artificial intelligence. The need for a sound basis in maths and science to master skills in that area of rapid technological innovation is obvious. The proposals advanced by the Times Education Commission, to introduce a new baccalaureate qualification including both academic and vocational options, recognise this economic reality. The government is right to look again at how school qualifications are structured.

Yet it will also need to pull policy levers outside the classroom. A recent report of Alan Milburn's review on young people and work, commissioned by the government last year, points to other factors behind the prevalence of Neets, some of which may be less palatable to Labour MPs. The evidence shows that, once young people out of work or training begin claiming a health and disability benefit, they struggle to come off it. The welfare state, Mr Milburn argues, is focused more on income replacement than enabling participation in the labour market. Any solution to the Neets crisis must be coupled with welfare reform: young people need to be given the skills to succeed, and then encouraged to use them.

Walk in the Parks

Maintaining a walking route through every national park is a service to posterity

In his celebrated guide to the Lake District, William Wordsworth, the Romantic poet, wrote of the collective wish to preserve the beauty of the area shared by those throughout Britain who "deem the district a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy".

That spirit of collective commitment to the beauty of Britain's countryside was the basis for the national parks system, established by the Attlee government over a century later.

There are now 15 national parks, displaying wonders of the natural landscape from the lochs of

the Cairngorms and the Trossachs in Scotland, to the sharp ridges of the Snowdonia mountains, to the sprawling woodlands of the New Forest, the granite tors of Dartmoor and the rolling chalk hills of the South Downs.

Credit is due to John Scott, a 65-year-old who is nearing the end of a 2,300-mile trek through the Slow Ways National Parks Trail, a crowdsourced hiking route that links all 15 national parks. That is twice the length of the walking route from John o'Groats to Land's End.

Scott began in Norfolk in March and is approaching his final destination of Nairn, near

Inverness. He has covered between 15 and 20 miles each day.

Scott reports that parts of the route still need work from volunteers. Each walker who takes on the challenge, or part of it, can help to check and improve the route for others. That is a valuable gift to posterity, for which Scott deserves thanks from any lover of Britain's most precious landscapes. It is fitting, perhaps, that his day job is as a conflict resolution mediator. Who could have malice in their eye or hatred in their heart, when looking out over the waters of Loch Lomond? And after 2,300 miles, who would even have the energy?

World

'SAS war hero killed my unarmed

Afghan family says decorated soldier should be punished for alleged crimes, **Anthony Loyd** reports from Kakarak



The last time Esmatullah saw his father and elder brother he was ten years old. It was late in the day in the village of Kakarak and it was raining. Neither man had long to live.

They were standing in the yard of the family home, in custody, surrounded by Australian SAS soldiers with camouflage-painted faces. Esmatullah's father, Mohammed Esa, was about 60 years old. The military after-action report and later court documents referred to him only as "an old man". Esmatullah's brother, Ahmadullah, was about 22 and had a prosthetic leg after a motorbike crash in his teens: the same documents call him "man with prosthetic leg".

There was no time for goodbyes. Esmatullah, his mother and siblings were taken away by a group of soldiers to another compound. At sunset came the sound of shooting. The next time Esmatullah saw his father and brother they lay dead in the rubble of their home, codenamed Whiskey 108 by the Australian special forces, with close-range gunshot wounds. Some of his father's head had been blown off. His brother's prosthetic leg was missing.

Many years later Esmatullah was to see the prosthesis again. This time it was in a photograph, in which an SAS soldier was drinking beer from the stump of the false leg. Another soldier, wearing a baseball cap, was cheering him on, a clenched fist raised.

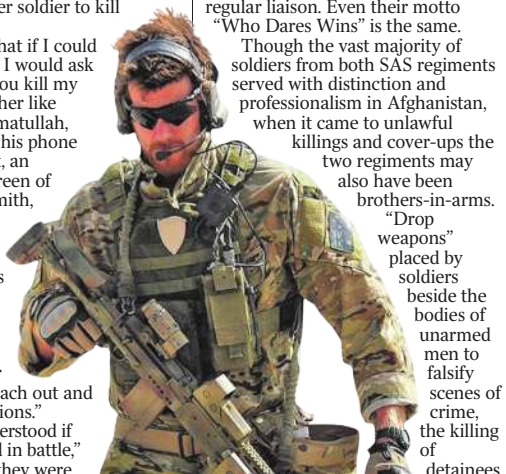
The man raising his fist is Ben Roberts-Smith, Victoria Cross: a special forces war hero. Seventeen years after the day of blood and rain and painted faces in Kakarak, he is facing trial on five charges of war crime - murder.

Among the charges against him, the former SAS corporal is accused of killing Esmatullah's brother and ordering another soldier to kill his father.

"I often felt that if I could reach that man I would ask him, 'why did you kill my father and brother like that?'" said Esmatullah, now 27, pulling his phone from his pocket, an image on its screen of Ben Roberts-Smith, gleaned from a recent online report.

"But for years I felt desperate, not knowing who killed them, and with no hope of ever being able to reach out and ask those questions."

"I'd have understood if they were killed in battle," he added, "but they were



killed inside our home, unarmed. To this man I would say: 'if you really wanted, you could have taken them away to prison, but you chose to kill them and bomb my house. Why?'"

Trial

The charges against Ben Roberts-Smith, now 47, who was arrested at Sydney airport on April 7 and was later bailed, awaiting trial, follow a joint investigation by the Office of the Special Investigator and the Australian federal police. If convicted, the offence of war crime - murder carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

The most significant military prosecution in Australian history has riven the country, polarising opinion between supporters of the former officer — whose chiselled looks, imposing figure and Victoria Cross still make him an easily digestible hero — and his critics, among them some members of Australia's special forces who have accused Roberts-Smith of cold-bloodedly murdering detainees and relishing their killings, far from being blinded by the "fog of war".

The evidence and impending trial are remarkable not just for the

“

To this man I would say: you could have taken them to prison but you chose to kill them. Why?

accusations of war crimes against a man awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in charging two Taliban machinegun posts in 2010. Its outcome will hold special resonance in the UK too. Many of the allegations made against Roberts-Smith and other members of the Australian Special Air Service Regiment accused of unlawful killings in Uruzgan province between 2009 and 2013 closely resemble those made against the British SAS operating in Helmand between 2010 and 2013.

The two regiments share a lengthy history, including shared operational doctrine and training philosophy, and regular liaison. Even their motto "Who Dares Wins" is the same.

Though the vast majority of soldiers from both SAS regiments served with distinction and professionalism in Afghanistan, when it came to unlawful

killings and cover-ups the two regiments may also have been brothers-in-arms. "Drop weapons" placed by soldiers beside the bodies of unarmed men to falsify scenes of crime, the killing of detainees

who were already in custody, faked after-action accounts and the embittered climate of the Afghan war in which special forces soldiers judged it better to kill unarmed suspects or civilian men of military age rather than detain them — the description of war crimes committed by the Australian SAS are startlingly similar to the accusations made against their British counterparts.

Both regiments have been the subject of inquiry. In the UK, the Afghan Independent Inquiry chaired by Lord Justice Sir Charles Haddon-Cave is examining allegations of at least 80 unlawful killings by the British Special Forces in Helmand.

In Australia's case, a four-year internal investigation headed by Major General Paul Brereton examined similar allegations made against Australian troops. It concluded with the release of the Brereton report in 2020, which found that 25 Australian special forces members had been involved in 39 unlawful killings of Afghans.

Brereton's findings were groundbreaking. They shattered the public misconception that the deaths had occurred as the result of split-second decisions made by soldiers in the heat of combat, revealing instead that all the unlawful killings had involved unarmed detainees, often civilian, who were in custody and posed no threat.

Moreover, the Brereton report resulted in a raft of Australian special forces reforms, which included better oversight of operations, the disbandment of a particular SAS squadron, and emphasis on more strident accountability.

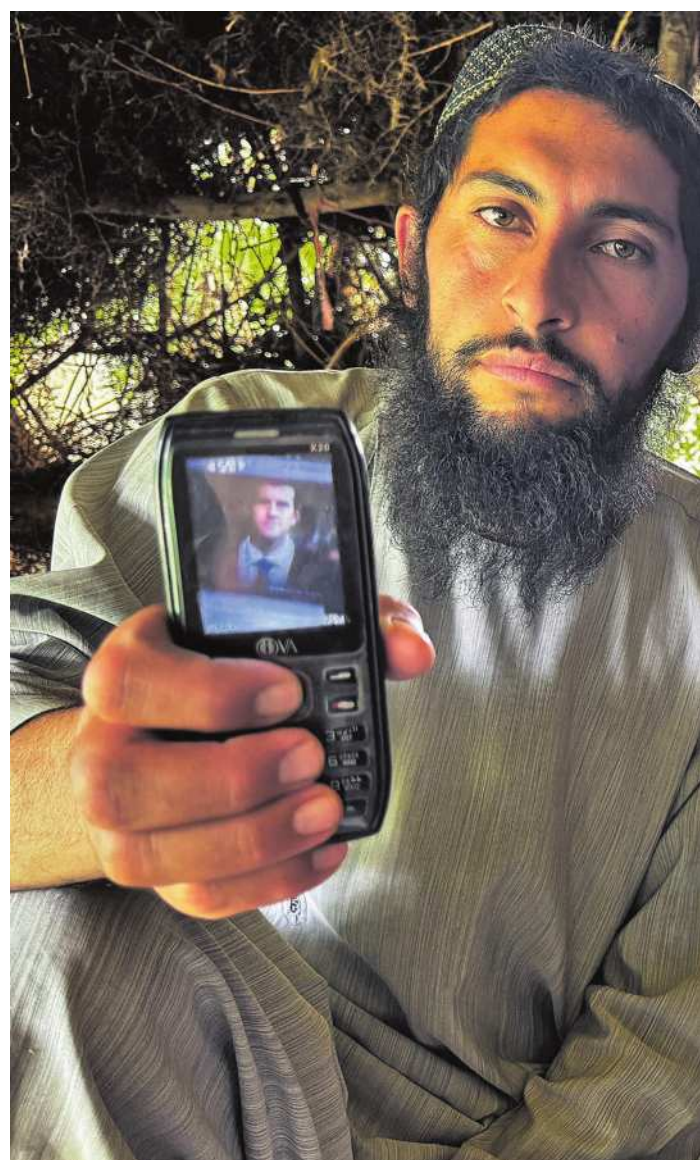
It also recommended further investigations into war crime suspects, and referred details from its findings to the federal police. Brereton's inquiry was the catalyst for the creation of the Office of the Special Investigator, the Australian government agency working with the police to investigate war crimes in Afghanistan, whose work eventually led to the criminal charges against Roberts-Smith.

Whiskey 108

These charges — all of which Roberts-Smith denies — involve five killings between 2009 and 2012. In each case the victims were allegedly unarmed, under control by Australian troops and posed no threat. The victims included a handcuffed Afghan farmer who was kicked down a cliff face in the village of Darwan in September 2012, reportedly by Roberts-Smith, who then ordered another soldier to kill him; and two detainees who were shot dead in the village of Syahchow in October 2012.

Yet it is the killings of Esmatullah's father and brother in the village of Kakarak on April 12, 2009 — almost 17 years to the day before Roberts-Smith was arrested at Sydney airport and charged — which best exemplify the hunger to kill and the glorification of killing among some members of Australia's special forces at the time.

Ironically, the huge volume of credible detail already in the public domain concerning the Whiskey 108 incident and other unlawful killings is



partially due to Roberts-Smith's own decisions.

In 2018, after a series of detailed investigative articles by The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and The Canberra Times, which had used the pseudonym "Leonidas" for Roberts-Smith, he had sued for defamation. That trial included testimony from numerous serving and former SAS soldiers, as well as Afghan witnesses and military experts. When it concluded in 2023 the judge, Justice Anthony Besanko, dismissed Roberts-Smith's claims and found that the newspapers had substantially proved many of the most serious allegations against the former SAS soldier to be true, including those concerning his involvement in the killings at Whiskey 108.

As the defamation trial was a civil matter, the bar by which Justice Besanko found in favour of the newspapers and against Roberts-Smith was lower than that required to find guilt in a criminal case, needing

only a "balance of probabilities" to be required as the civil standard of proof.

Nevertheless, the trial produced a trove of witness testimony, most notably by special forces soldiers whose identities were hidden by coded numbers, some of whom had described in detail the killing of Esmatullah's father and brother.

In Kakarak, Esmatullah told The Times that his own memories of that day were still burnt into his mind, up to the point when he saw his brother and father for the last time.

"I remember enough of that day when the soldiers came, even though I was young," he said. "I remember the way foreign soldiers had painted their faces. I remember them standing on the roof and looking down at us in the yard. I remember my brother handcuffed. I remember the rain."

Esmatullah said a bomb, probably an artillery or mortar round, had hit the family compound in the morning, forcing them all to seek shelter in the basement. In the far distance came

Homelessness comes knocking on the door of a Hollywood institution
Page 24

Nonnas know best: the bakery duo with recipe for social media success
Page 25

father and brother at our home'

ANTHONY LOYD FOR THE TIMES; ANTHONY DEVLIN/REUTERS



Esmatullah shows a picture of Ben Roberts-Smith on his phone screen; the Australian SAS corporal meeting Queen Elizabeth; with another SAS member who drank beer from the prosthetic leg of Esmatullah's dead brother; and, far left, out on patrol

the sporadic sound of shooting.

The SAS had arrived at the family's home in the late afternoon, as part of a bigger operation against the Taliban in the area around Kakarak. The region had been a bastion of Taliban support since 2002, when an

American AC-130 gunship had mistaken a wedding party in Kakarak for a Taliban assembly and opened fire, killing 48 people and wounding 117.

Esmatullah's family were still in hiding when the soldiers arrived, and

were ordered out from their shelter. They were gathered in the yard, where Esmatullah saw his father and brother. The men were in custody, having been found in a hiding place later described by SAS witnesses as a tunnel. It is unclear whether or not the two men were Taliban members.

Esmatullah, his mother and the family's other children were escorted out of the compound. The accounts of SAS witnesses in the defamation trial described what happened next.

According to federal court documents, Roberts-Smith was second in command of the SAS patrol, which was commanded by another soldier known as Person 5. A witness testified that the patrol commander had already spoken repeatedly of the need to give a new member of the patrol his first kill, using the phrase "blood the rookie".

Evidence from a soldier at the defamation trial, judged to be truthful by Justice Besanko, described how,

once the women and children had gone, Roberts-Smith forced Esmatullah's father to his knees and ordered the new soldier to kill him. The soldier did so, shooting him once in the head with an M4 rifle. According to other witnesses, Roberts-Smith then dragged Esmatullah's brother outside the compound, threw him to the ground and shot him with a Minimi machinegun.

An SAS soldier codenamed Person 24 said he saw Roberts-Smith throw the brother to the ground and "immediately put a machinegun burst into his back".

Another soldier, Person 41, also said he saw Roberts-Smith shoot the disabled man. He said Roberts-Smith looked up and saw him watching. "He looked at me and said 'are we all cool, we good?'" Person 41 recalled. "I just replied, 'yeah mate, no worries'."

After the killings, the unit's troop commander was told that the two slain men were "squirters", attempting

of the Red Cross in Kabul — and taking it away as a war trophy.

Nicknamed "Das Boot", the leg next appeared in a photograph taken in the Fat Ladies Arms, the unofficial bar on the Australian special forces base in Tarinkot, where it was used as a novelty drinking vessel. Roberts-Smith appeared in the picture but denied drinking out of the leg himself, though he admitted cheering on others who did.

He said later that every member of his SAS squadron was given a glass replica of the leg with "2 Squadron" engraved on it.

Legacy

The upcoming trial, which may not begin until as late as 2029, will focus on whether or not the charges against Roberts-Smith of unlawful killings are provable "beyond reasonable doubt": a higher bar for a criminal case than that required as the civil standard of proof in the earlier defamation case.

Whatever the outcome, it is unlikely to affect the fate of Esmatullah and his family. Though the Afghan Inquiry Compensation Scheme, set up after the Brereton Report, is considering awarding them compensation, the impact of the killings has already ruined the family's life and prospects.

"After the incident life was never again the same," said Esmatullah. "Our home was destroyed and my father and brother were left dead. Though a child I had to take responsibility for the family's land and work. I never went back to school. As the result of that day my younger brother and I became illiterate farmers."

It is also unlikely that Esmatullah will ever get his wish to ask Roberts-Smith the question "why?" To date, the Office of the Special Investigator is not taking evidence for the trial from Afghans still inside Afghanistan, and there is little chance Esmatullah will ever be called to Australia to testify.

With outcomes so limited, and the effect of the killings so devastating, it is no wonder that fury resides with grief as the legacy of that day 17 years ago. "I would like to see him executed, to see him hanged," said Esmatullah. "My first choice is to see him punished according to our Islamic laws, an eye for an eye, execution by hanging. I want that."

“
A witness said the patrol commander had spoken of the need to 'blood the rookie' with his first kill

to flee after the compound was breached.

Ben Roberts-Smith has never denied killing the man with the prosthetic leg, but insists he did so as the man was carrying a weapon and running. "He had his hand over the top of the weapon, because he was carrying it down next to his body like that ... hunched over, as in, running like that with his shoulders down," Roberts-Smith told the federal court.

Esmatullah finds Robert-Smith's account of the incident, as well as his reputation for bravery in action, impossible to balance.

"He would have been a hero if he had fought my brother and father in battle, not shot them down in the yard of my home unarmed," he said. "How can you consider that heroism? Those soldiers are savages."

Witness testimony described an SAS soldier, Person 6, removing Ahmadullah's prosthetic limb — which the family say was originally made by the International Committee

World



'Captured cartel boss was behind beauty influencer murder'

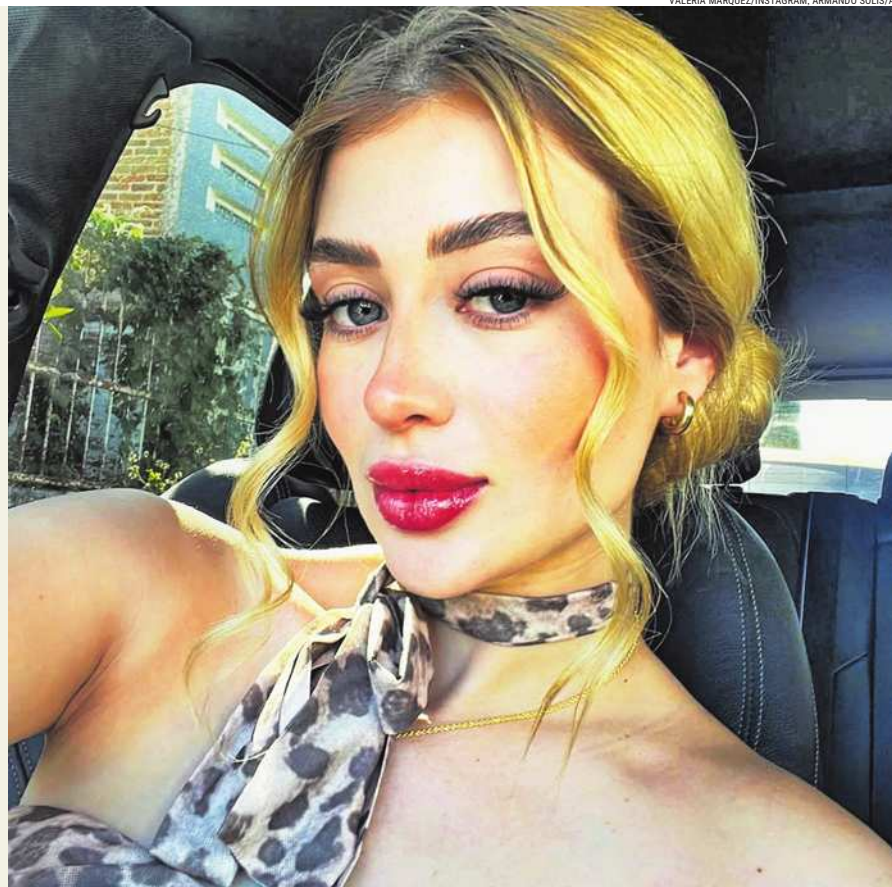
Two unsolved murders in Mexico — one of a 23-year-old beauty influencer while she was broadcasting on TikTok, another of a mayor during his city's Day of the Dead celebrations — were ordered by the same drug lord, according to prosecutors (Stephen Gibbs writes).

Ramón Ángel Álvarez Ayala, known as "El RI", a senior figure in the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, was captured after a car chase in a special forces operation in the state of Jalisco on Thursday. One of his security team was killed.

Omar García Harfuch, the federal security secretary, accused Álvarez, who was

released from jail in 2022, of being the mastermind of "multiple violent acts in the region". These included the murder in May last year of Valeria Márquez, an influencer, during her weekly live stream from her beauty salon in the city of Zapopan in Jalisco state. A man, allegedly pretending to be a delivery driver, entered the room and asked her to confirm her name. When she did so, he shot her twice.

García Harfuch said Márquez had been in a relationship with Francisco Álvarez, one of El RI's sons. García Harfuch claimed the son had apparently called on his father to organise the hit. Francisco Álvarez remains at



Valeria Márquez was killed on a live stream. Above, "El RI" after his arrest. The killing of a cartel boss in February led to attacks across Mexico, far left

fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine. Last year it was designated a foreign terrorist organisation by the Trump administration.

Its founder and long-time leader, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho", was killed by the Mexican army in February in an operation that involved the assistance of US intelligence. His death prompted a wave of violence across Mexico.

Mexico has not specified the extent of any American assistance in El RI's arrest. But Ronald Johnson, the US ambassador to Mexico, was among the first to congratulate the government on the capture, saying: "Those who generate violence and traffic fentanyl will be held to account."

large, as does the gunman.

The second killing linked to El RI took place in November,

during a Day of the Dead festival in the city of Uruapan, Michoacan state. Carlos Manzo, the city's mayor and a father

of two, was at the event with his family when a teenage gunman shot him in the back. The gunman was killed at

the scene by the mayor's security team and Manzo died in hospital.

The cartel extorts businesses and trafficks

Dining out on Hollywood's boulevard of broken dreams

From our correspondent

KEIRAN SOUTHERN
LOS ANGELES



The dinner rush is under way and waiters glide through the oak-panelled room wearing red jackets that match the leather of the booths that have hosted Hollywood power lunches for more than a century.

Frank Sinatra loved the restaurant, billed as Hollywood's oldest, while last year Taylor Swift introduced it to a whole new generation when she referenced it in her song *Elizabeth Taylor*.

Musso & Frank Grill is almost a museum, only with better food. Grilled lamb kidneys and bacon, Charlie Chaplin's favourite dish, is still on the menu, as are classics such as chicken potpie. To dine here is to be transported back to Los Angeles' golden era.

Yet outside the doors on Hollywood Boulevard lies a very modern problem.

On a recent visit, a grey-haired man with a torch strapped to his forehead was rummaging in bins near the entrance while across the street, by the stars for Francis Ford Coppola and Harrison Ford on the Walk of Fame, a man with a heavily tattooed face lay

sprawled on the sidewalk. Apparently unconscious, his bare legs had no protection from the Californian sun.

Looking out from the front window of Musso & Frank, it is easy to see why homelessness remains a big issue in Los Angeles. Hollywood is among the hardest hit neighbourhoods in the city.

Karen Bass, the mayor of LA, was dealt a blow last month when a report found that LA's unsheltered population had risen by 3.4 per cent compared with the year before. There are about 45,000 people living on the city's streets. Bass, her reputation already blighted by her mishandling of last year's wildfires, will face difficult questions before November's mayoral election.

Musso & Frank found itself at the centre of the debate after the New York Post declared it was "plagued by homelessness", publishing photographs of people sleeping outside.

Rick Caruso, a billionaire developer and former mayoral candidate, warned that his beloved Musso & Frank was "at risk of closing". He said that customers were avoiding the vagrants by entering through the back door in the car park. "The food is so darn good ... that people are going out of their way, getting around the encampments," he said.

Mark Echeverria, the chief executive, said the business was not in any danger but thanked fans for their concern.

Bass's administration has prioritised



Musso & Frank Grill, where growing numbers of homeless camp outside

clearing the roadside tents that have appeared across Hollywood. But this has not dealt with the problem of the people who sleep in them.

Rand Corporation, a non-profit think tank, reported in May that the total number of rough sleepers was stable but that the proportion sleeping on the street or in cars had risen by 11 per cent in 2025. Many of them suffer from mental illness or drug addiction.

"We've kind of addressed the low-hanging fruit," said Sarah Hunter, the co-author of the report and a senior behavioural scientist at Rand. "And now it's going to be even more challenging."

This will increase pressure on Bass, who made tackling homelessness a top priority when elected in 2022. Her op-

ponent in November, Nithya Raman, is a left-wing council member who argues that Bass's flagship Inside Safe policy is too expensive. Bass blamed the White House for the latest rise in the Los Angeles homeless population. She said: "The Trump administration has driven up the cost of gas, groceries and rent, pushing more families to the edge, and slashed critical safety net funding."

Critics of the mayor point out that the county has spent billions of dollars trying to tackle homelessness over the past decade yet the issue remains acute. They claim she and her Democrat predecessors have made homelessness a viable lifestyle choice. Some on the street say as much themselves. There are generous outreach services, including free food and healthcare. There is also no requirement for rough sleepers to get sober before being given a publicly funded place to stay.

Perhaps, as Caruso suggests, Angelinos have simply decided to ignore the problem after years of living with the city's dysfunction. It would explain why Bass is widely viewed as favourite in the mayoral race, despite presiding over rising homelessness.

If nothing else, Angelinos can console themselves that Musso & Frank is not going anywhere. Sitting at the bar with a dirty martini, the aroma of a filet mignon wafting from a nearby table, the city's problems seem far away.

Trump calls off attacks

Iran President Trump said that the "perimeters of a deal" with Tehran had been reached and called off fresh attacks. Trump said on Truth Social that he had agreed after being "asked by Iran and Middle Eastern countries to hold off any attack". He said that the outline of the agreement would include the "immediate, complete" opening of the Strait of Hormuz and "an end to Iran's nuclear threat".

Five killed in ferry fire

Indonesia Five people have died and dozens are missing after a ferry caught fire at sea. KMP Mutiara Sentosa 2, which had 271 passengers, was travelling from Surabaya in East Java to Makassar in South Sulawesi. The captain reported the fire at about 8.30am (2.30am BST) yesterday. The cause is unknown. Officials said the ferry was almost entirely engulfed in flames and that 225 people had been rescued, but 41 were still unaccounted for.

Aussie kids still online

Australia As many as eight in ten Australians under the age of 16 are still using social media after it was banned, a government commissioned report found. More than half the children surveyed said platforms had not asked them to confirm their age. A fifth said platforms had incorrectly estimated their age to be above 18, while a third said they had simply listed their age as 16 or older to retain access.

Le Pen can be renaissance woman too, court tells Macron's party

France
David Chazan Paris

A French court has rejected a lawsuit by President Macron's centrist party aimed at barring Marine Le Pen from using the word "renaissance" in her presidential campaign slogans.

It ordered Macron's Renaissance party to pay €5,000 each to Le Pen and her National Rally party to cover part of their legal costs. The court dismissed

claims by Renaissance that Le Pen's campaign poster, showing her standing with arms outstretched in front of the words "Pour la France, la renaissance" (for France, the renaissance), misled voters and usurped its identity.

The judgment is regarded as a blow to Gabriel Attal, Macron's former prime minister and presidential candidate for Renaissance. It had argued that the slogan was "clearly intended to exploit the reputation of our movement by appropriating an essential element of its identity, namely its name".

However, the court said the use of the word "renaissance" did not create confusion with the name of Macron's party or suggest any link between the two political groups. It concluded that the slogan did not illegally interfere with the democratic process because it was not intended to deceive voters.

Renaissance said it would appeal. The National Rally described the ruling as "a real slap in the face for the Renaissance party and its supposed candidate Gabriel Attal who were intending to deprive the Rally and Marine Le Pen of their freedom of expression".

The court also rejected a counterclaim by Le Pen and her party that the lawsuit was abusive. It ruled that Macron's party had made "a legal error without any intention to cause harm".

Renaissance said it brought the lawsuit "with the sole aim of protecting the

identity, values and name under which thousands of activists have been working for years for the French people".

Le Pen's campaign began last month after a court upheld her corruption conviction but effectively ended her ban on running for office. She claimed the allegations were politically motivated. Her popularity appears undented. Polls place her well ahead of rivals in the first round of the election and narrowly ahead in the second.



The Carracci brothers' copies of Correggio's frescoes, which depict biblical figures and scenes, are on display together for the first time at the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples. Left and middle: one of the works before and after restoration



of Capodimonte, where the paintings eventually found a home.

Now, after years in storage, the works have been restored and returned to public view. Their inclusion in the permanent collection of the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte marks the first time all six paintings have been displayed together in a museum. "The effect is quite extraordinary," said Eike Schmidt, the museum's director.

The paintings depict biblical figures and scenes drawn from Correggio, including the Virgin Mary in flowing pink and blue robes as well as a bare-chested Christ, dynast in a white cloak, feeding a dove.

Correggio's original frescoes were removed when part of the church was rebuilt, shortly after

the Carraccis made their copies, to enlarge the choir. Although a central section of the apse decoration and a handful of fragments survived, most of the cycle was destroyed. "The pictorial quality of the canvases provides invaluable testimony to the importance of Correggio, the great master of the Emilian school," Schmidt added.

Two of the paintings that now form the centerpiece of the display — *The Coronation of the Virgin* and *Christ in Glory* — were restored three decades ago. The remaining four had remained in storage and were in a poor state of conservation, with layers of grime accumulating on their surfaces and the canvases developing bulges and tears.

Lost masterpieces brought back to life

Craning their necks beneath the soaring vaults of a softly lit church, two artists painstakingly copied some of the defining frescoes of the High Renaissance onto six large canvases (James Imam writes).

The artists were the brothers Annibale and Agostino Carracci, and they had travelled to Parma to study frescoes painted by Correggio in

the Church of St John the Evangelist. The church was renowned for the dizzying illusionism of Correggio's decorations, which adorned its walls and crowned its dome.

Painted in about 1586, the canvases entered the collection of the powerful Farnese dynasty, whose influence stretched from Parma to Rome, before passing to Charles of Bourbon. Then king of Naples, Charles built the Palace

Bakery nonnas rise to the occasion

Italy
James Imam Milan

First, the grannies saw through a seven-kilogram block of bread with surprising force. Next, they fry a sausage measuring several metres long, coiled like a cinnamon roll, in a very generous helping of olive oil.

When Teresa Calia inhales the aroma of red wine from a glass as large as her head, Grazia Incampo, her life-long friend, sternly reminds her that the booze is meant for cooking only.

All is quickly forgiven, though, when they hold up their creation to the camera.

"It's the most beautiful sausage sandwich in the world," say the grannies in unison, as stracciatella and tubes of pork spill out from two cushion-like slices of bread resting on a wooden board.

The video is one of dozens posted by Antico Forno Santa Caterina, a historic bakery in the town of Altamura in Puglia, on Instagram. Such reels have

turned local nonnas Calia, 88, and Incampo, 90, into unlikely social media stars.

They are part of a growing online phenomenon known as "nonna-maxxing", which celebrates wholesome Italian grandmothers around the world. Offering an authentic alternative to the sometimes airbrushed offerings of younger influencers, their humorous videos are helping local businesses thrive.

Calia and Incampo rose to fame after Giacomo Barattini, the bakery's co-owner and a distant relative of Incampo's, asked her to teach him the traditional way of making bread and focaccia. He began filming the volunteers' work, and it quickly went viral. "There's no exhibitionism," Barattini says on a video call from the bakery. "Just strong values and tradition, good food and joy."

In one video, Calia wears a yellow hard hat as she shovels Nutella onto hunks of bread. In another, she cuts through pouring wine with scissors because "my doctor told me I needed to

cut alcohol". Similar videos have racked up hundreds of thousands of likes.

"Why are we here? To work and to bring satisfaction to you and to people," Incampo explains on the video call. "Our parents brought us up to do lots of things, and we want to teach the younger generations."

Interest in nonnas has been growing for years, with Pasta Grannies, a British YouTube channel, producing content for more than a decade, and the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver travelling Italy to gather their recipes for a 2018 television series. The trend has been further fuelled by social media person-

alities such as Silvana Bini, whose cooking videos have helped promote the family bakery in Montespertoli, near Florence. Her posts are created by her 30-year-old grandson, Gabriele Martini.

Since achieving social media fame, Bini has been in high demand, last week spending five days in New York to make various dishes — including lemon chicken and panzanella, a rustic Tuscan comfort food made with stale bread soaked in tomatoes, onions and oil — in an Italian cuisine production studio in Brooklyn.

"If you ask me, grannies are all the



Teresa Calia and Grazia Incampo rack up hundreds of thousands of clicks

rage," Bini says after returning to Italy from her US trip. "Grannies are sweet, so everyone likes them."

For the grannies themselves, social media activity is about connecting with the world, sharing experience and keeping active.

At 90, Licia Fertz's social media content, whether toking on a huge joint, or championing topless sunbathing, is more irreverent than one might expect from your typical grandmother. "Nonna Licia", as Fertz is known, lives in Viterbo, near Rome, and has posed nude for Rolling Stone. She was named on the BBC's 100 Women, which celebrates the role of women in shaping the 21st century, alongside Michelle Obama and the human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. Emanuele Usai, Fertz's grandson, said that posting helped her recover from depression nine years ago, when Fertz's husband died, and gave her a sense of purpose. "I like meeting people, discussing different ways of seeing and thinking," Fertz said. "It opens the spirit and keeps you young."

The family destroyed by Kim's missile

Ukraine

Catherine Philp Radushne

The explosion ripped through the windows, doors flew off their hinges and the ceiling collapsed. Then, nothing at all. "The most terrible thing was the silence," Lyudmyla Yosypovych said. "We knew then that no one had survived."

The house in Radushne had been home to the village's largest family, the Voronovs, who lived there with seven of their ten children, some cats, geese and a dog.

Yosypovych, 77, who lived next door, had known the family since they moved there in 2020, before Russia's war rushed into all their lives, taking the two eldest children abroad as refugees and the third into service in the Ukrainian army.

Early on Thursday, war came for the other Voronov children when a ballistic missile crashed through the roof of their house, destroying it in an instant.

As the day wore on, more details emerged about the scale and significance of the tragedy in Radushne, a small village outside Kryvyi Rih, the home town of President Zelensky. In



dumb Russian war." Although Ukraine has become increasingly adept at shooting down Russian-launched drones, only Patriots are capable of reliably intercepting hypersonic ballistic missiles. North Korea's recent restock is a warning that Russia's ability to keep up the ballistic campaign on Ukrainian cities may not be limited by the size of its own missile stockpile.

Inside the Voronov house on Thursday morning were Olena, 41, and Artem, 47, along with their seven younger children and Artem Jr, their one-year-old grandson, who spent most weekdays in his grandparents' care while his father, Danylo, was posted in Mykolaiv.

Rescuers pulled out Olena and Artem Sr's bodies from the rubble, followed by those of Emilia, 7, Azariah Ilai, 11, and Marko, 17. "When I saw the bodies of the children laid out on the ground, it was unbearable," Yosypovych said. "They were a beautiful family, so full of life." Dawn lit up the full horror of the rescuers' task. "Nothing was left of the house."

None of the four other children — Federica, 9, Zakhar, 13, Viorika, 14, and Dominika, 16 — could be identified but are presumed dead, along with baby Artem.

Messages were spreading across the community, reaching scattered family members. Matviy Voronov, the eldest son, who is living in Germany, learnt of the strike from a village group chat. "Is anyone from the Voronov family there?" he wrote. "Maybe someone saw them? I'm their son." A neighbour replied: "Matviy, I was there, only the foundation is left of the house, everyone died."

As neighbours walked to lay flowers and stuffed toys at the ruins of the house where rescue crews were still working, Danylo, the soldier, arrived from Mykolaiv to place framed photos of the dead and missing. He knelt down and cried. "I lost everyone," he said. "Parents, sisters, brothers, my son. It still seems like this is some kind of dream, that they are somewhere else. But no." The only living creature found at the site was the family's dog.

President Zelensky shared a photo of the family on X. Right, Danylo Voronov, a soldier, returned to Radushne to find rubble



his nightly address, Zelensky revealed that the missile was North Korean, the first used in Ukraine for a year, after reports that Pyongyang was helping restock Moscow's arsenal of ballistic weapons.

Days earlier, Zelensky had warned that Russia was preparing for a deployment of 30,000 North Korean troops, the first since Pyongyang sent 14,000 men to fight Ukraine's 2024

counteroffensive into Kursk. He said: "The alliance between the Moscow scumbags and the deranged regime in North Korea exists for the sake of missiles, North Korean troops on our borders here in Europe and killing our Ukrainian children."

"What matters most, however, is not mere sympathy and condemnation but air defence missiles and pressure on Russia that can stop this

Moscow bomber 'targeted general'

Russia
Liz Cookman

At least three people were killed when an explosive device was detonated at an Italian restaurant in Moscow.

The blast struck a private party attended by high-profile Russian figures, Russian and Ukrainian media reported, and may have targeted Col Gen Aleksandr Chayko, commander of Russia's Aerospace Forces.

The explosion occurred at about 8pm on Saturday at the Balzi Rossi restaurant on Kudrinskaya Square, close to the centre of the capital.

Video showing preparations for an event at the restaurant, shared by a pro-Kremlin blogger, reportedly includes a stage with the words "Alexander 55", prompting speculation that Chayko, who recently turned 55, had been celebrating his birthday.

A woman tried to bring a home-made bomb into the building, according to the Russian National Anti-Terrorism Committee, but was prevented from entering by a security guard. When the guard opened a box she said was a gift, it exploded.

The unidentified woman, the security guard and another guest were reported to have been killed.

Sergei Sobyanin, the mayor of Moscow, said: "Yesterday, a brutal terrorist act was committed in Moscow that claimed human lives."

"The victims are currently in the city's hospitals, where they are receiving all necessary care."

The restaurant had been holding a private function, according to its website. It is known for hosting high-profile members of Russia's elite, as well as celebrities and politicians.

Chayko has been identified by



Col Gen Aleksandr Chayko led Russia's aerospace forces

Ukraine as the lead commander of Russia's occupation of Bucha, on the outskirts of Kyiv, in 2022, in which hundreds of residents were killed and tortured.

No suspected motive for the bombing has been disclosed, and police continue to investigate. Roads around the square were briefly closed after the incident. The explosion had been intended to hit guests dining on

Balzi Rossi's outside summer terrace, Russian media reported, but the event was heavily guarded. This may have prevented a higher death toll.

The device was equivalent to about one kilogram of TNT and packed with metal ball bearings.

The woman carrying it may not have known she was transporting an explosive device, Russian counter-terrorism experts told the state press agency Tass, suggesting she may have been paid to do so by Ukrainian intelligence.

Nadezhda, a resident of a nearby building and one of the witnesses, told the newspaper: "Firefighters were the first to arrive, followed by ambulances, then the National Guard and other services. When I left the building, I saw smartly dressed women running out of the restaurant. They were carrying their shoes, followed by a shirtless man with a bloody T-shirt. They were heading toward the Barrikadnaya metro station. It seems the explosion occurred outside the restaurant."

Domestic criticism of Moscow has mounted amid a series of security failures, as Ukrainian drone strikes have hit deep into Russian territory in recent weeks.

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Business

WORLD MARKETS (Friday's close. Change on the week)

FTSE 100

10,868.05 (+131.82) ▲



Dow Jones

52,485.03 (+537.78) ▲



COMMODITIES

Gold

\$4,043.41 (-33.64) ▼



Brent crude (6pm)

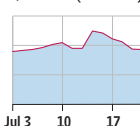
\$87.77 (-3.23) ▼



CURRENCIES

£/\$

\$1.3464 (+0.0120) ▲



£/€

€1.1688 (-0.0027) ▼



Santander and TSB staff prepare for job cuts after £2.65bn acquisition

Helen Cahill Financial Correspondent

Fears over job cuts are looming at Santander as unions start preparing for redundancies in the wake of the bank's £2.65 billion acquisition of TSB.

Staff representatives have launched negotiations over how to fairly evaluate employees working in similar roles as they await news on how many jobs will be axed, sources told The Times.

TSB and Santander have different metrics for assessing the performance

of their staff and it is understood unions at both banks are in talks about how to create a fair system for evaluating individuals in the redundancy process.

Santander has not yet confirmed how many jobs will be lost across the combined group, which now employs about 23,000 people.

Banco Santander, the Spanish parent group, has already announced 130 job losses at TSB before the formal transfer of staff through the so-called Tupe process, but more cuts are expected as the

group seeks to save £400 million in costs.

One source said: "It goes without saying that in any merger there are going to be synergies that the banks will realise. And there is going to be an impact on jobs."

Sources said staff at Santander were broadly relieved to be merging with TSB, as news reports at one stage had suggested the bank's Spanish owner might seek to exit the UK market entirely. It is understood some staff at

TSB have started looking for new jobs in anticipation of cuts at the bank.

A spokeswoman for Santander said: "We have not yet made operational decisions on jobs. However, we will ensure that our colleagues are informed of any changes at the appropriate time."

A spokesman for TSB said: "Whenever we make any changes to our business, the priority is to consult first with impacted colleagues to ensure they're fully supported."

Speaking to Bloomberg last year,

José García Cantero, chief financial officer of Banco Santander, said cost savings would "come from projects that TSB is running that we will not need to do when the two banks merge".

● HSBC is expected to make a pre-tax gain of \$300 million from selling its Egyptian retail bank to Emirates NBD, a bank based in Dubai. Georges Elhedery, chief executive of HSBC, has off-loaded the unit as part of a restructuring designed to deliver cost savings of \$1.5 billion by the end of 2026.

AstraZeneca pays \$220m in drug dispute

University of Sheffield brought patent case

Alex Ralph
Chief Business Correspondent

AstraZeneca has paid out \$220 million after reaching a settlement with the University of Sheffield following a High Court patent dispute over one of the pharma giant's bestselling cancer drugs.

The university filed a lawsuit against the FTSE 100 company in June 2024, alleging that AstraZeneca had made misrepresentations to induce it to amend a patent licence agreement relating to olaparib, sold under the brand name Lynparza, a blockbuster oncology medicine.

Lynparza is one of the most lucrative drugs in AstraZeneca's portfolio. It generated \$3.3 billion in sales last year, almost 6 per cent of group revenues, and is approved in 114 countries.

The drug is part of a group of oncology medicines that helped rebuild AstraZeneca's drugs pipeline after patent expiries and transformed the company into one of the world's cancer drug specialists.

It also helped transform the finances, balance sheet and share price of AstraZeneca, which has become one of the London Stock Exchange's two most valuable companies alongside HSBC.

Oncology drugs generated 44 per cent of AstraZeneca's \$58.6 billion group revenue last year.

A trial had been scheduled to begin in late June, but a global settlement agreement was reached in May covering all disputes in the litigation in exchange for AstraZeneca's payment.

The \$220 million (£166 million) settlement is significant for the university, which had an £11 million underlying operating deficit in 2024-25 and gener-

ated £806 million in underlying income.

A spokeswoman for Sheffield University said the sum would be shared between the university, the original funder and the academic inventor.

The dispute stemmed from a contract disagreement in 2017. Sheffield University owns patent rights covering the use of compounds known as "Parp inhibitors" in the treatment of cancer. This method was identified from research carried out at the university by Professor Thomas Helleday in collaboration with the University of Newcastle during the early 2000s.

Kudos Pharmaceuticals, a UK biotech, developed the compound olaparib and in 2004 the university granted Kudos an exclusive worldwide licence of its patent rights to develop and commercialise medicines using Parp inhibitors for the treatment of cancer.

Kudos was acquired by AstraZeneca in January 2006 for \$210 million as the company looked to bolster its drugs pipeline, and regulatory approval for the sale of olaparib was secured in Europe and the United States in 2014.

In July 2017, AstraZeneca reached an agreement with Sheffield University, shortly before AstraZeneca in turn struck a collaboration deal worth up to \$8.5 billion with Merck, the multinational pharma company, for the joint development and commercialisation of Lynparza and an unrelated compound.

Sheffield University claimed it was "induced to enter into" the 2017 agreement with AstraZeneca through false representations. AstraZeneca denied liability.

Lynparza is the leading Parp inhibitor
Continued on page 28



Football crazy The Premier League will add £33 billion to the UK economy over the next three seasons, according to new analysis. Its chair Alison Brittain, left, presented the trophy to the Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard in May Page 33

Brunswick considers sale of stake

Louisa Clarence-Smith

Brunswick, the public relations group, is considering selling a stake in the business that could deliver a payout for partners, The Times has learnt.

The firm, which has 27 offices around the world, has appointed advisers to review its capital structure as it prepares for its next phase of growth.

It would mark only the second time Brunswick has brought in external investors since it was founded in 1987 by its chairman Sir Alan Parker, 70, who started the company from his parents' kitchen table.

In 2021, Brunswick sold a 10.7 per cent share of the business to BDT Capital Partners, the Chicago-based investment and merchant banking group, in a deal that valued the company at about £500 million. It also triggered a £140 million payout to partners, of which £70 million went to the chairman.

It boasts about 220 partners, with revenues of around £400 million last year and earnings before interest and taxes of over £50 million.

Parker owns about 45 per cent of the business while the remaining equity is divided between BDT and current and former partners.

Brunswick is considering seeking external investment to help the firm grow and invest in senior recruits, as well as ensuring that equity in the firm is valuable for partners by potentially giving them an opportunity to liquidate some of their shares, it is understood.

Brunswick is retained by about a third of FTSE 100 companies and ranked No 1 in the UK for mergers and acquisitions, according to Mergermarket data published last week.

Partners at Brunswick are due to discuss options at their annual meeting in Washington in October, sources told The Times. No final decision has been made, although the company is expected to remain an independent and partner-led firm. BDT is not expected to exit its position as part of the process.

Brunswick declined to comment.

Business

Need to know

1 AstraZeneca has paid out \$220 million after reaching a settlement with the University of Sheffield after a High Court patent dispute over one of the FTSE 100 pharma company's bestselling cancer drugs. **Page 27**

2 Fears over job cuts are looming at Santander as unions start preparing for redundancies in the wake of the bank's £2.65 billion acquisition of TSB. **Page 27**

3 Brunswick, the British public relations group with 27 offices worldwide, is considering selling a stake in the business in a move that could deliver a windfall for partners. **Page 27**

4 The US Federal Reserve is facing a credibility crisis as investors question whether its new chairman will raise interest rates under Donald Trump's presidency. **Page 30**

5 The Japanese authorities are expected to confirm today that Tokyo has taken joint action with the United States to arrest the decline of the yen to a 40-year low. **Page 30**

6 The experience economy is "a hotbed of innovation ... and can be instrumental in unlocking economic growth," according to Tom Middleton, economic consulting partner at Grant Thornton UK. New research suggests 40 per cent of people in the UK prioritised spending on experiences over material things. **Page 31**

7 The Premier League will add £33 billion to the UK economy and generate close to £15 billion in tax revenue over the next three seasons, according to analysis from EY, the big four accountancy firm. **Page 33**

8 Britain's creative industries contribute 5.5 per cent of UK gross value added to the economy, rivaling sectors such as construction, and are growing faster than the wider economy, according to the government. Ministers have committed at least £500 million over three years to back innovation, research and development across the UK. **Times Entrepreneurs Network, pages 34-35**

“

Wealth and other taxes are being presented as answers to our fiscal pressures. They are not.

Gerard Lyons,
page 31



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Can Drastic Dave help lift

Investors will hear how Sir Dave Lewis plans to revive the struggling drinks group this week, **Jessica Newman writes**

In what promises to be another frantic week for corporate results, few boardrooms will be under as much scrutiny as the one at Diageo.

But it will not be the drinks giant's full-year numbers — City analysts expect a 2.1 per cent slide in organic net sales to \$19.6 billion — that command the most attention. All eyes will instead be on the new chief executive's strategic shake-up.

At Diageo's headquarters in London on Thursday, Sir Dave Lewis will deliver his first significant strategy update since he took charge of the FTSE 100 company in January.

The capital markets day in Soho is being framed by the City as a watershed moment: an opportunity for Lewis to convince them he has a viable plan to put some fizz back into the flagging group, whose world-renowned brands include Guinness and Johnnie Walker.

"Investors are focused on the degree to which Diageo's strategy day may lead to a short-term profit and margin reset," analysts at UBS said in a recent note, adding that the market expects 2027 to be a "transition year".

The stakes are high. Diageo's shares, which closed at £16.34 on Friday, have lost more than half their value over the past five years, with the group's market cap down to £36.5 billion.

The company's struggles have reflected slowing growth in key markets such as the United States, changed drinking patterns and a lack of strategic clarity, which led to the ousting of Lewis's predecessor Debra Crew last summer.

That Diageo approached Lewis — who earned the moniker "Drastic Dave" from almost three decades at Unilever and then as boss of Tesco —

about the top job suggests there was a feeling that a fresh pair of eyes, unencumbered by sentimental attachment to legacy brands, was needed.

Details of the Yorkshireman's restructuring plans have already started to emerge, with changes to top leadership roles, including the heads of North America, Great Britain and Africa, signalling his desire for a clean slate.

Lewis has been quick to outline his priorities for Diageo, sharpening its focus on more affordable, mass-market spirits and overhauling the company's complex operating model. His presentation to investors and analysts is expected to last most of the afternoon.

Having visited almost all of Diageo's operating regions in the past six months, Lewis is expected to address what he has found to be a fundamental disconnect between the company's impressive drinks cabinet of brands and its operational execution.

Instead of focusing brand by brand, Diageo is set to implement a category-by-category approach to better align with how customers shop and work its often forgotten, mainstream and value products harder.

Diageo has a lot of categories to play with. Formed in 1997 through the combination of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan, it has more than 200 brands, including Tanqueray and Gordon's gin, Don Julio tequila, Pimm's, Smirnoff and Baileys.

Under the decade-long leadership of Sir Ivan Menezes, who died on the brink of his planned retirement three years ago, Diageo was transformed into a globally diversified behemoth, moving upmarket by adding celebrity-backed tequilas and premium whiskeys to its portfolio. However, the focus on premium brands has meant Diageo has missed out on more mainstream spirits at a time when consumers are feeling the squeeze, something Lewis is planning to rectify.

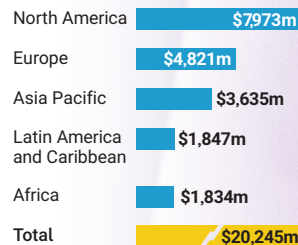
Edward Mundy, an analyst at Jefferies, has pointed out various ways the com-

Sir Dave Lewis and star tequila backer Peggy Gou, right

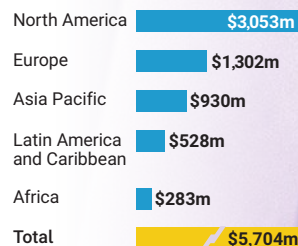


In need of a livener

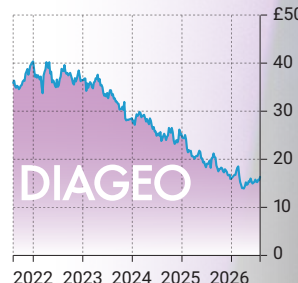
Net sales, financial year 2025



Operating profit before exceptional items, financial year 2025



How the share price has dropped



pany could build competitive category strategies, including selective price drops on upmarket tequila in the US and accelerating the rollout of ready-to-drink products.

Lewis has already hinted there were plans to pursue underexploited areas

such as canned cocktails, the one sector of the spirits market that is experiencing significant growth globally. In the UK alone, canned cocktails account for 27 per cent of the £787 million ready-to-drink market, according to NielsenIQ. Diageo's current ready-to-drink

Apple faces \$32bn iPhone photo lawsuit

Louisa Clarence-Smith
US Business Editor

Apple faces a \$32.5 billion lawsuit for allegedly collecting biometric information from users of its iPhone photos app.

Up to 6.5 million consumers in the US state of Illinois could seek \$5,000 each in damages from Apple in a class-action suit for illegally collecting their biometric information through a facial-recognition feature without proper notice, consent or retention policies.

The claimants allege Apple collected their biometric data without consent in violation of the Illinois Biometric Information Privacy Act, passed in 2008 owing to concerns over how emerging technology was collecting and using biometric identifiers such as retina or iris scans, fingerprints, voiceprints or faceprints that are biologically unique.

The law bans companies from collecting a person's biometric information unless they give notice and obtain

the person's written consent. Plaintiffs in the class action allege Apple's photos app, which is pre-installed on Apple devices, uses facial recognition technology to scan faces and create a "faceprint" for each person detected in the user's photo library. They claim once the software has a sufficient sampling of images, the photos app applies an algorithm to identify the iPhone user, creating biometric information that is stored on the device and catalogued in the photos app.

In 2017, Apple began syncing photographs and associated data across multiple Apple devices, if those devices were logged into iCloud with the user's Apple ID. Plaintiffs claim this data is biometric information under the Illinois law and that Apple collects and stores the biometric information on its servers.

Apple has sought to have the case thrown out, saying whether the alleged data qualifies as biometric identifiers or information depends on individualised proof about each user's choices and

labels. It has claimed the photos app has privacy safeguards so that numerical vectors it uses to organise photo albums cannot recreate a face and are not inherently linked to a person's name or identity. Apple claimed it cannot access vector data, does not decrypt or use album labels and does not know who appears in a user's albums, whether any album is labelled or what any label says.

A judge in Illinois ruled in June that consumers had met the requirements to pursue a class action. On Thursday the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit denied Apple's appeal against that ruling.

Andrew Schlichter, lawyer for the plaintiffs, told The Times: "The allegation that Apple created faceprints of people appearing in photos, including children, and stored those faceprints on its cloud-based servers without ... consent or telling device users what it was doing raises serious privacy concerns."

Apple was contacted for comment.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27
AstraZeneca settles dispute

across five tumour types, based on prescription volumes, and the only Parp inhibitor to improve survival in early breast cancer, according to AstraZeneca's annual report.

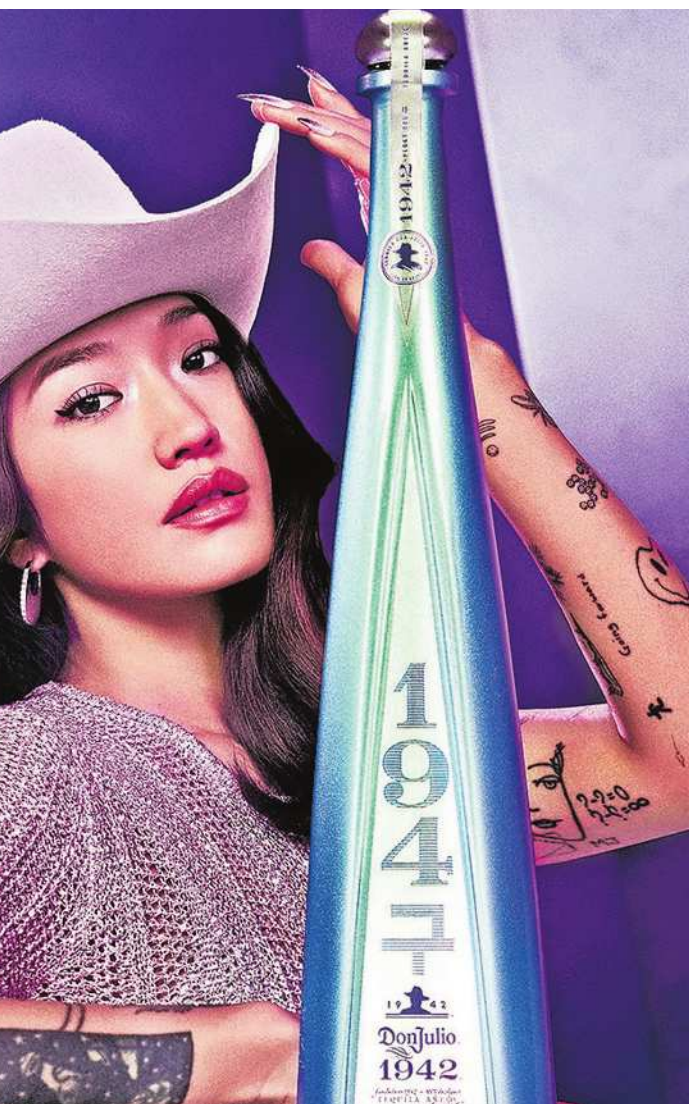
The university spokeswoman said: "The parties to the proceedings have reached an out-of-court settlement without any admission of liability. The terms are confidential."

A spokesman for AstraZeneca, which disclosed the \$220 million settlement in its half-year results last week, said: "Patient access to Lynparza is unaffected by this settlement with the University of Sheffield. This resolution does not increase the licensed patent's term in any way and simply relates to the collaboration agreement involving AstraZeneca and Merck."

"We look forward to continuing to supply patients Lynparza as part of our commitment to ensuring access to innovative medicines."

Professor Helleday declined to comment.

spirits at Diageo?



portfolio consists mainly of extensions of its established labels, such as Smirnoff Ice, a 27-year-old brand that has effectively been left alone at the back of the cupboard. While Diageo arguably has all the right ingredients to dominate this sector, it has been largely

viewed internally as low priority. The reluctance has been exacerbated by the company's decentralised region-by-region operating model, without the global scale and co-ordination needed to push these initiatives effectively.

Lewis has not minced words when it

comes to Diageo's operational inefficiencies, describing some of its systems as "not fit for purpose".

At his first results outing earlier this year, having been in the job for only a couple of months, he offered investors an idea as to how frustrating he found Diageo's outdated and overly complex framework. As an example, Diageo was still entering 60 per cent of all its orders manually, while in India, where it employs about 30,000 people, its payroll system was ten times more expensive than the one at Tesco, which has more than 15 times as many employees.

A source within the company said operating on a market-by-market basis had resulted in too many complicated processes and systems building up, adding that there was a feeling of readiness among colleagues to change its ways.

The operational shake-up is expected to affect a group of about 100 senior leaders, which will be left between 20 per cent and 30 per cent smaller. It is unclear whether this headcount reduction forms part of its programme targeting \$625 million of total cost savings by 2028, alongside asset sales, or is in addition to it. Specific numbers on job cuts are not expected to be announced for the moment.

Having already halved its interim dividend and pledged to cut payouts to a "more appropriate level" to help shore up its balance sheet, Diageo is clearly willing to make difficult decisions.

"There needs to be evidence that this reset is final," Mundy said.

While Lewis will need to address Diageo's \$21.7 billion debt pile, this will almost certainly not translate into quick fire sales, especially of crown jewel assets such as Guinness. Any lingering fears over whether Diageo is looking to offload Guinness should be firmly put to bed as the company is expected to outline how it plans to capitalise on its booming growth trajectory.

While some observers initially dismissed reports of a Guinness shortage around Christmas 2024 as a marketing ploy, the fact that a business of Diageo's scale was struggling to keep the taps flowing in British pubs served as a sobering reminder of the "not fit for purpose" systems and weak customer relationships Lewis inherited.

His vision for Diageo to stop chasing what it hopes customers will drink, and start catering to what they are actually drinking, appears clear. But the market will judge him on his ability to unpick a complex legacy and build a leaner, more consumer-focused business.

Boots sale in doubt as Westons cut bid

Helen Cahill

The attempt by the billionaire Weston family to take over Boots in a £7 billion deal is at risk after they cut their offer for the pharmaceutical chain.

The family, which has businesses across Britain and Canada, has been in talks with Sycamore Partners, the private equity owners of Boots, over a purchase of the business.

Yet the deal is now at a standstill after the Westons' attempt to cut their offer price was rejected. The Westons reduced their bid after a rival suitor pulled out of the race for Boots, according to The Telegraph, which first reported the story.

Sycamore Partners, based in New York, acquired Walgreens Boots Alliance, the parent company of Boots, for \$23.7 billion last year and had been in talks with multiple parties about a sale of the chain, including Sigma Healthcare, the Australian pharmacy group.

Sycamore is also considering a London listing of Boots.

Stefano Pessina, the Italian executive who was previously a 17 per cent shareholder in Walgreens Boots Alliance, tightened his grip on Boots as part of the deal by taking a near-50 per cent stake in the business.

It is understood that if the Weston family do not budge on their present offer, which is below a price Pessina is willing to accept, he will call off the talks and revert to his earlier plan. That was for a turnaround of the business under the new chief executive of Boots, Alex Baldock, the outgoing boss of the Currys electricals chain, en route to an initial public offering in the next year or two.

Baldock, who has spent eight years on a revamp of Currys, is expected to oversee the operations of Boots's retail and pharmacy business in the UK, Ireland and Thailand, as well as Boots Opticians in the UK and the No7 beauty company. It is expected that he

will not take on the running of the brand in Mexico and Germany, as it is thought these businesses may not be part of Boots's wider operations in future years.

Boots is one of the biggest consumer brands on the British high street, operating more than 1,800 UK stores and employing more than 50,000 people. The business was established by John Boot in Nottingham in 1849.

Boots's UK's profit before tax rose by 25 per cent to £337 million in the year to the end of August 2025, according to its most recent accounts filed at Companies House. Revenues were up 3.2 per cent to £7.5 billion, while total comparable retail sales increased by 5.8 per cent. The company said its performance had been driven by growth in beauty, but that its sales were being affected by "the highly competitive nature of the health, wellness and beauty category".

Boots and Sycamore declined to comment.

The week ahead

The monthly US employment report on Friday will be closely watched for signs that the war in the Gulf has affected the jobs market.

Despite higher oil prices resulting from the conflict, the American labour market has remained strong. However, analysts say a prolonged war and higher than normal energy costs may eventually force companies to trim their costs by reducing headcounts.

The non-farm payroll report for July is expected to show an increase of 91,000 jobs and an unemployment rate of 4.3 per cent. A significantly higher jobs growth number could raise concerns about an overheated economy and firm up bets of interest rate rises, with traders now betting on a near 70 per cent chance of a September increase.

Kevin Warsh, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, last week repeated his firm commitment to bring inflation down to the 2 per cent target, but investors expressed uncertainty about how he planned to reach that longstanding target.

Jim Baird, chief investment officer



Kevin Warsh has pledged to bring US inflation back down to 2 per cent

with Plante Moran financial advisers, said: "If there was an unexpected heating up of labour conditions, that would contribute almost unambiguously to the Fed [being] more likely to raise at the next meeting."

Fed credibility crisis, page 30

TOMORROW

The restructuring at HSBC will be in the spotlight again at its interim results after it recently announced the sale of its Singapore insurance business, its Australian mortgage and personal loans book and its Egyptian retail bank.

Georges Elhedery, chief executive of the FTSE 100 bank, is

expected to update the market on progress with efforts to simplify the sprawling finance giant, aimed at delivering \$1.5 billion in annual cost savings by the end of 2026.

Analysts expect the lender to report net operating income of \$35.9 billion for the first half, up from \$32.2 billion last year,

with profit before tax forecast to reach \$18.9 billion.

Interims: BP, Capita, Coca-Cola Europacific, ConvaTec, Domino's Pizza, Fresnillo, HSBC, Keller, Metro Bank, Rotork, Sabre Insurance, SIG, Smith Nephew, Synthomer, Travis Perkins, XP Power
Finals: Filtronic

WEDNESDAY

After a two-year reorganisation under its chief executive António Simões, investors in Legal & General are expecting a decent set of interim results. City analysts are forecasting core operating profit of £883 million for the first half, up 2.8 per cent from £859 million in the same period last year, with profit set to rise across all of the group's reporting divisions, which comprise institutional retirement, asset management and retail. L&G's institutional retirement business has been leading the charge in pension risk transfers (PRT), where the group buys up defined benefit pension schemes from corporate sponsors, and the unit is set to

deliver core operating profit of £635 million, up 2.8 per cent from £618 million. Simões is seeking to deliver PRT deals worth up to £65 billion over the next five years.

Analysts were largely positive on L&G's performance at its last set of results, when the group launched a £1.2 billion share buyback, and so far this year the retirement giant's shares have risen almost 15 per cent.

Interims: 4Imprint, Beazley, Coca-Cola HBC, Glencore, Hiscox, Istock, Legal General, Royal London
Trading update: Next
Economy: SMMT UK monthly car registrations; S&P Global UK services PMI



THURSDAY

Investors will be eagerly seeking signs that the long-awaited turnaround promised by Cindy Rose, who was appointed to lead WPP last year, is taking shape when the advertising group reports its half-year results.

Under her "Elevate 28" strategy, the former Microsoft executive has pledged to return the FTSE 250 company to underlying growth next year. However, the market has been

hit by macroeconomic weakness that may well have weighed on the confidence of major brands.

City analysts have forecast a 6.5 per cent decline in organic revenue over the first six months of the year, slowing to a 5.3 per cent fall over the full year.

Elsewhere, it is fair to say that Sir Dave Lewis will command a great deal of attention when Diageo reports annual results.

Interims: Admiral,

CAB Payments, Derwent London, Harbour Energy, Hikma Pharma, Metlen, PageGroup, Persimmon, Quilter, Serco, TP Icap, Tritax Big Box Reit, WPP
Finals: Diageo, PZ Cussons
Trading update: Wizz Air
Economy: S&P Global UK construction PMI

FRIDAY

Economy: US employment report

Business

Classic pop songs spin new royalties

The M&G-backed music investment vehicle that owns the rights to tracks by Lewis Capaldi and Joan Jett has set its sights on signing chart-topping artists to breathe new life into its catalogue (Emma Powell writes).

Seeker Music aims to reinvent songs from its 19,000-strong

collection, which it will then release via its own record label, in an effort to capture a bigger slice of the royalty income.

For its first release this month, it has signed up the American rapper and singer Flo Rida to rework *Vacation*, a 1982 single from the Go-Gos, who were fronted by Belinda Carlisle. "There's a lot



The Go-Gos with Belinda Carlisle had a hit single, *Vacation*, in 1982 which will be reworked by the US rapper Flo Rida



of big artists who have signed deals with independent distributors, and so we approach a lot of those artists because they have the flexibility to do anything they want," Evan Bogart, chief executive of Seeker, said.

Instead of passively collecting the royalties from its collection of songs when they are played on the radio, a

television advert or used in a film or show, Seeker said it aims to generate a greater return by "flipping" the songs it has acquired into new versions.

The company, founded in 2020, made its name when it persuaded the American singer Shaboozey to sample a 2004 hit by the American rapper J-Kwon. The result, *A Bar Song (Tipsy)*, spent 19 weeks at No 1 in America, one of the longest runs in US chart history.



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Taciturn Fed facing crisis of credibility

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

The US Federal Reserve is facing a credibility crisis as investors question whether its new chairman will raise interest rates under Donald Trump's presidency.

Investors warned the sparse communications from Kevin Warsh, the new chairman of the world's most powerful central bank, and his unwillingness to say he would use interest rates to quell inflation has spooked US bondholders.

The cost of long-term US debt rose to the highest in nearly two decades at the end of last week after Warsh said he would provide no "forward guidance" to investors about the path of interest rates. The yield on 30-year US bonds hit 5.22 per cent, the highest since 2007, after Warsh's second press conference as Fed chairman. It was the biggest one-day bond sell-off since Trump's "liberation day" tariffs in April last year.

Traders pointed to Warsh's vague comments about the need to raise interest rates to get inflation back to the Fed's 2 per cent target at a time when energy prices are expected to push up prices in the world's largest economy.

"Markets are questioning the Fed's credibility," Aditya Bhavne, chief US economist at Bank of America, said.

The Fed kept its benchmark interest rates on hold last week, an outcome expected by most Wall Street analysts. Warsh told journalists he would not reveal his preferred measure for inflation or "spoon-feed" traders any information about how the central bank could respond to another jump in inflation.

"With no forward guidance, the market does not understand how the Fed will get to 2 per cent inflation," Torsten Slok, chief economist at Apollo, the global alternative asset manager, said. "The lack of clarity about how to get there is what's pushing yields higher, because there is now a risk that it may take longer or involve a policy mistake."

Warsh, 56, was Trump's pick to lead the Fed after the president lambasted his predecessor Jerome Powell, 73, as a "moron" who was "too slow" to cut interest rates last year. Trump, 80, has continued to demand lower borrowing costs to stimulate economic growth.

"The real question is whether Warsh can raise interest rates and face blowback from the man who hired him," Eric Loneragan, hedge fund manager at Calibrate, said.

Warsh is presiding over a divided voting committee, with three policymakers voting in favour of interest rate rises in July.

Neel Kashkari, one of the dissenters, said interest rates needed to rise to "manage against the risk that high inflation could become entrenched". Rates were left unchanged at 3.5 per cent to 3.75 per cent.

Bhave said: "We think the need to re-establish credibility increases the likelihood that the Fed will hike in September, all else being equal."

Warsh is considering cutting back the number of press conferences held by the Fed chairman as part of his attempt to revamp the central bank's communications, The New York Times reported.

US and Japan take joint action to prop up the yen

Mehreen Khan

The Japanese authorities are expected to confirm today that Tokyo has taken joint action with the United States to arrest the decline of the yen.

Reports said that Japan's finance ministry would announce the joint currency intervention, which traders said took place at the end of last week.

The co-ordinated US-Japanese intervention is the first in 15 years and comes after the yen slumped to its lowest value against the dollar since 1986.

Scott Bessent, the US treasury secretary, was photographed on Friday with a "to do list" that indicated the US would buy between \$5-10 billion worth of Japanese yen.

The currency has been stuck at 40-

year lows over concerns about Japan's plans for fiscal expansion and its historically low interest rates. Last week the Bank of Japan kept its benchmark borrowing costs unchanged at 1 per cent, prompting the yen to fall and triggering the currency intervention, which pushed the yen up from 164 against the dollar to 157, a three-month high.

It is the sixth time the finance ministry has propped up the exchange rate since 2022 and the first time the Japanese authorities have acted in concert with the US since 2011.

Analysts at Nomura warned that the currency decline would not change as long as the country's fiscal policy remains stimulative. Last week the government of Sanae Takaichi announced plans to cut food taxes.

Gerard Lyons

How will PM meet his spending commitments? Not through taxes

“Where will the money come from to fund the prime minister's spending commitments? This is the defining fiscal question.

Last autumn, Rachel Reeves rebuilt the fiscal buffer to £21.7 billion. The buffer allows scope to meet the fiscal rules if there are shocks. But it is modest when set against public spending of around £1.4 trillion a year. Since then, the Iran war has weakened growth, borrowing has exceeded expectations and the buffer has shrunk. It is now under £10 billion.

John Healey, the chancellor, faces the challenge of rebuilding this buffer and funding new spending, to meet the fiscal rules. His options are limited. The Office for Budget Responsibility is unlikely to upgrade its forecasts for economic growth or future tax revenues.

Also, it is not easy to borrow more, with gilt issuance already around £250 billion this fiscal year and debt servicing costs elevated. Issuing new defence bonds would add to this challenge.

Another option, where the Bank of England shifts policy to buy gilts, is neither imminent nor likely.

That leaves taxes. But Labour's manifesto promised not to raise the main taxes of income tax, national insurance or VAT. Attention has thus turned elsewhere.

Suddenly, wealth and other new taxes are being presented as simple answers to Britain's fiscal pressures. They are not.

Modern tax systems have evolved because governments need large, reliable and predictable sources of revenue. Those revenues come primarily from taxing recurring flows of income, profits and spending, where taxpayers have the ability to pay. That is why modern states rely on income tax, national insurance, corporation tax and VAT. These recurring taxes generate around four-fifths of tax revenues across the OECD and Britain is no exception.

Wealth taxes depart from that principle, which helps explain why country after country has abandoned them. Where they remain, they have become another tax on the middle-class.

Supporters of a wealth tax often cite the Wealth Tax Commission. Yet



Mayors such as Bev Craig in Manchester will now be part of the fiscal picture

its own research undermines the case. Even at a tax rate of just 1 per cent, it estimated that behavioural responses could shrink the tax base by between 7 and 17 per cent, calling this “not a trivial amount”.

It also found around 85 per cent of taxable wealth above £5 million was held in business assets. In other words, the tax would fall primarily on entrepreneurs, business owners and productive capital, not idle wealth.

Many people are asset rich but cash poor. A tax that is detached from recurring cashflow eventually forces borrowing or the sale of assets simply to pay the tax. It alters behaviour, depresses asset values and adds administrative complexity.

The markets are unlikely to view the option of increasing capital gains tax as a sensible option either. The City is acutely aware that official analysis shows that a 10 per cent rise in capital gains tax reduces revenues by £3.6 billion after three years.

New taxes on property are not a cash cow. Residential property is

Britain's largest asset class and is already heavily taxed. There is a strong case to reduce or eliminate stamp duty, as it reduces housing and labour mobility. But the prime minister has said he has no immediate plans to change it. Instead, there is talk of a new annual property tax or a land value tax. Each of these runs into the challenge of people's ability to pay higher amounts. The new mansion tax due in 2028 falls into this same trap.

A land value tax has been talked about in glowing terms. But there is little evidence elsewhere that a land value tax has succeeded as a significant national source of revenue. Where it has worked, it has generally been a modest local tax rather than the backbone of a national tax system. There is the difficulty of valuing land, too.

Britain has learnt these lessons before. Schedule A income tax on owner-occupied property was abolished in 1963 and domestic rates in England and Wales disappeared in



ANNABEL LEE-ELLIS/PA

1990. Both taxed ownership rather than recurring cashflow and ultimately collided with economic reality. Britain does not need another search for a mythical source of revenue.

The argument that Britain taxes income too heavily has force. But the answer is not to layer new taxes on wealth or property. It is to reduce the size of the state and the tax burden.

Britain's highly progressive tax system already leaves the exchequer dependent on a relatively small number of taxpayers.

The top 1 per cent pay 27.2 per cent of income tax and the top 10 per cent pay 58.4 per cent.

More than half of the population live in households that receive more from the state than they pay in taxes. Even among non-retired households, the figure is 46 per cent.

Last week saw talk of a new levy to pay for social care. Hypothecated taxes — those earmarked for a specific purpose — are justified, but the challenge is to keep funds ring-fenced and to ensure that any fund grows sufficiently to cover the future liability. Taxes already have designated funds. Income tax, for instance, goes into the consolidated fund, while national insurance goes into the national insurance fund. But, behind the scenes, they support general government spending.

New plans for fiscal devolution add uncertainty. Mayoral regions will retain a share of business rates and, in some cases, income tax receipts, incentivising them to grow their local economy and future tax base. Offsetting cuts in government grants would ensure fiscal neutrality but clarity is needed on responsibility in the event of fiscal distress.

Fiscal discipline is critical. The bond market is not going to be taken in by tax increases that will not bring in more revenue or by taxes that may dampen future growth.

Simplifying the tax system, reducing marginal tax rates and widening the base of income tax and VAT makes sense. Britain does not have a hidden source of untapped tax revenue. But it does have a public spending problem.

Dr Gerard Lyons is chief economist at Netwealth

Experience economy ‘can boost UK growth’

Charlotte Bend

Two weeks have passed since the World Cup ended and for many it is a chapter they would rather forget. However, it appears not all hope is lost: the unity felt through England's ultimately futile efforts may have revealed an opportunity for business leaders.

Tom Middleton, economic consulting partner at Grant Thornton UK, claims that shared experiences could offer “soft power [with] tangible economic benefits”. He said: “Getting behind the Three Lions brought the usual surge in sales of TVs, shirts and lager, but there were some unexpected winners too. Oasis streams soared, second-hand marketplaces took off and dating apps lit up during hydration breaks.”

A shared experience rippled through pubs, hotels, restaurants, retailers, transport networks, media platforms and businesses that might appear to have little connection to the event itself,” Middleton said.

New research has suggested that 40 per cent of people in the UK prioritise spending on experiences over material things. This figure rises to 54 per cent among 18 to 34-year-olds.

Conducted by Opinion on behalf of Grant Thornton UK, the survey of 2,000 adults asked to what extent the experience economy could offer growth to the nation. Thirty-four per cent said they would be willing to “make sacrifices” to prioritise spending on experiences and 26 per cent suggested that experiences would be last on the list to be cut back when needed.

Glastonbury, Wimbledon, Oasis, Harry Styles, Premier League Football and world-class museums all show how the UK is already adept at offering experience. The UK-made Abba Voyage, which has been attended by four million people since its launch in 2022 at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London has had a sizeable cultural tourism impact, with visitors spending an average of £224 per trip, according to Sound Diplomacy.

Middleton said: “The most recent iteration of the UK's industrial strategy included a commitment to take targeted action to transform the UK's highest-potential sectors over the next decade. One of these priority sectors was the creative industries, but little focus was given to the experience economy. If [Andy] Burnham is serious about growth across the whole of the UK, he needs to recognise the pivotal role it can play.”

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REGIONAL SECTORS FORGE AHEAD

With the new prime minister's promise to 'deliver growth in every postcode', Britain's mid-market businesses are proving that local strengths can become national advantages

From digital media in Manchester and life sciences in Cambridge to high-tech manufacturing in the West Midlands and clean energy on the east coast, growth-hungry companies across the country are already demonstrating the sector strengths of the UK's regions.

"I'm struck by the momentum, particularly from ambitious mid-market businesses that are ready to scale and compete," says Amanda Murphy, CEO of Lloyds Business and Commercial Banking. Riding the wave successfully calls for tailored financial advice. "Our role is to help turn aspirations into investable plans,"

Murphy says. "That means providing the right financial support at each stage of growth. This can look like funding new machinery and larger premises, strengthening working capital, enabling export opportunities and helping attract top talent."

Lloyds already supports around one million UK businesses, and

this year it will provide over £35 billion in new finance to firms operating and investing here. This includes £9.5 billion ringfenced specifically for SMEs.

A series of roadshows hosted by Lloyds and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) have further highlighted the key role that regional, forward-thinking,

agile mid-market businesses play.

Murphy says: "What really stood out was the strength of our regional clusters, whether that's clean technology in the North East, advanced manufacturing in the West Midlands or Britain's urban centres, where business and academia are collaborating to turn new ideas into exciting commercial opportunities."

Take Special Melted Products in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, which produces speciality steels and nickel-based superalloys for critical applications in aerospace, oil and gas, and civil nuclear. The business is backed by a £28.5 million working capital facility from Lloyds, and is now

investing tens of millions in an ambitious programme to establish the UK's first large-scale superalloy forging facility, and an in-house research and development centre.

"Special Melted Products has a clear strategy to solidify its competitive edge, which will allow the team to build a world-beating business at the heart of Britain's advanced manufacturing sector," Murphy says.

Meanwhile, in the North East, firms have leaned into their natural geographic advantages to supercharge growth in offshore wind and clean energy. At the Port of Blyth in Northumberland, Lloyds is supporting the Energy Central cluster, an emerging hub for offshore wind, subsea decommissioning, battery manufacturing and renewables.

In May, the port announced its latest development, a £100 million expansion expected to create hundreds of jobs and strengthen the region's supply chain further.

"The North East has a workforce that understands heavy industry, as well as ports built to handle this scale of operation," Murphy says. "We can help regions capitalise on their strengths by providing the financial support that local businesses need."

The UK's regions already host many of the sectors that will define the next chapter of economic growth. While some are anchored by major industrial assets, others

“THE NORTH EAST HAS A WORKFORCE THAT UNDERSTANDS HEAVY INDUSTRY, AND PORTS BUILT TO HANDLE IT – FINANCIAL SUPPORT CAN HELP CAPITALISE ON THIS

are centred on laboratories, research campuses, science parks and innovation districts.

These are the focus of Lloyds' new report, Innovation Foundation, which argues that while Britain has world-class research capability, entrepreneurial talent and academic excellence, it must continue to invest in the infrastructure needed to turn those strengths into jobs and sustainable economic growth.

According to the report, UK universities generated £158 billion of economic impact in 2021/22, with every £1 of public research funding generating close to £10 in wider economic value.

Murphy believes these findings reinforce a broader lesson about the conditions that make growth possible. "To be productive, innovation needs talent, research, infrastructure and financial backing," she says. "When we invest in the places that combine those ingredients, more regions can turn this intellectual capital into new businesses, higher-value jobs and thriving local economies."

Local Growth Plans also highlight the role of both public and private investment in supporting high-potential clusters.

"Directing funding towards sites, grid capacity, transport links and skills can help attract larger flows of private capital and create the conditions businesses need to develop and flourish," says Murphy.

She explains that the pairing of stable government policy and Lloyds' access to capital should foster precisely that environment.

"Britain's regional mid-market businesses have the ambition, capability and opportunity to drive sustained growth. What they need now is certainty, and investment to allow them to generate that change – which Lloyds can provide."

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PHILIP OLDHAM/BPI/SHUTTERSTOCK

It's a £200m racket ... UK's love for padel keeps growing

Helen Cahill

Britain's obsession with the racket sport padel could rake in up to £233 million from players and investors, according to new analysis.

Padel has exploded in popularity since the pandemic and some enthusiasts are estimated to be spending almost £1,000 a year on the sport.

It was invented by the Mexican businessman Enrique Corcuera and his wife, Viviana, while on holiday in 1969. It has become the fastest-growing sport in Britain, with participation more than doubling last year as 860,000 people played the game at least once, up from 400,000 in 2024, according to LTA Padel, the sport's UK governing body.

People are expected to spend between £84 million and £123 million on padel court bookings and coaching every year, according to Novuna Finance, the personal loans business. Meanwhile, the group has estimated investors will spend between £46 million and £110 million a year on constructing new courts, creating an economy that could be worth more than £200 million annually.

Operators built 683 new padel courts last year to capitalise on growing demand.

Padel is also proving to be a lucrative business because individuals playing four times a month are spending an estimated £950 a year on the hobby.

Entrepreneurs and businesses made 270 trademark filings for new padel-related brands in the year to the end of March, up from 109 in the prior year, according to research by Mathys & Squire, the intellectual property law firm.

Meanwhile, large operators have been expanding their offerings rapidly, with David Lloyd Clubs and Padel United UK opening hundreds of courts and independent businesses opening up dedicated clubs.

Theresa Lindsay, chief marketing officer at Novuna Finance, said: "Padel's rise shows just how quickly a sport can go from a niche interest to becoming a major part of Britain's leisure economy. As more people take to the court, spending is growing across clubs, coaching, equipment and creating a new generation of facilities. The challenge now is keeping pace with demand and the commercial opportunity is substantial."

Premier League will add £33bn to UK economy in three years

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

The Premier League will add £33 billion to the UK economy and generate close to £15 billion in tax revenue over the next three seasons, according to analysis from EY.

The economic value of England's top domestic football competition has grown 14-fold since 1998-99, with record international viewing numbers and lucrative broadcasting rights creating one of the richest leagues in Europe.

Its economic contributions are on course to rise to an average of £11 billion a season over the next three seasons, up from £9.8 billion recorded in 2023-24.

Just under two thirds of the economic value of English football is generated outside London. The game added £5.9 billion to the economy outside the capital, with £3.1 billion in the north-west alone in the 2023-24 season — the region where Andy Burnham, an Everton fan, hails from. Two-thirds of the 108,000 jobs supported by the Premier League were outside London



Football added £3 billion to the economy in the northwest alone in 2023-24, top; spending on infrastructure has included Tottenham Hotspur's new stadium, left

It makes football one of the most lucrative sources of growth and tax revenue for the government.

Peter Arnold, chief UK economist at EY, said the Premier League was "one of the UK's most successful global exports", adding: "These impacts illustrate how domestic success, international appeal and reinvestment across football and communities reinforce one another, and how a world-class sporting competition can

deliver lasting value for the economy and society alike."

The league's broadcasting rights have rocketed in the past two decades, with international rights now outstripping domestic TV revenues. The Premier League is broadcast in 189 countries with nearly two billion viewers, generating export revenue of £1.8 billion.

More than a million overseas football fans visited the UK in 2023-24, adding more than £1 billion to the economy.

Football fans accounted for 2.6 per cent of all tourism to the country.

The game's record revenues have led to significant infrastructure spending on stadiums, training facilities and academies, led by Tottenham Hotspur's new stadium and Everton's Hill Dickinson stadium.

Of the 51 teams to have played in the Premier League, 22 have built or moved to a new stadium since the first season in 1992-93.

Clubs have added 290,000 seats to total stadium capacity since the Premier League's first season, a rise of more than half. Attendance reached a new record of 15.9 million last season.

"Looking ahead, planned and proposed developments represent intended investment of between £3.7 billion and £9 billion, with construction estimated to support up to 110,000 full-time equivalent jobs," EY said.

Money generated at the highest levels of the game supports community and grassroots football through the Football Association and government.

Transatlantic law firm is free to float

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A recently merged transatlantic law firm has paved the way for a possible London listing by winning regulatory approval for a structure that allows legal practices to float.

Ashurst Perkins Coie, the 11th highest earning firm in the City, has been granted alternative business structure status by the solicitors' watchdog.

The firm, the product of a merger this year of the City firm Ashurst and Perkins Coie from Seattle, is the largest in the UK to adopt the regulatory status, which would allow it to accept either private equity or public investment.

Shortly after authorisation from the Solicitors Regulation Authority was revealed, the firm rushed to quash suggestions that a London public offering was imminent.

The merger, which was first announced last year, created a firm with 3,000 lawyers, generating about £1.96 billion in annual revenue.

It emerged in last year's financial statement that equity partners at the London side of the firm earned average salaries of nearly £1.6 million. The comparable pre-merger figure for equity partners at the US firm trailed at slightly more than £1.4 million.

If Ashurst Perkins Coie were to float on the London market, it would be the seventh law firm to take the plunge into public investment.

The biggest to do so since liberalising legislation was passed nearly 20 years ago was DWF when it listed in 2019 in a £95 million initial public offering.

However, its time as a publicly listed legal services company was relatively short-lived as the business delisted four

years later when it was purchased by private equity.

The first law firm to float, Gateley, remains on the market along with Keystone and Knights, but the share prices of all three have failed to impress over the past few years.

A spokeswoman for Ashurst Perkins Coie said the firm was "not seeking and has no intention to seek third-party investment, and the structure was not put in place for that purpose".

Sources close to the firm have suggested that the alternative business structure was adopted in an attempt to ease the financial integration of the practice after the merger by allowing American lawyers to join the UK partnership.

American Bar Association rules broadly impose a strict ban on external investment in most US states.

Barclay brothers' group went bust owing taxes

Helen Cahill

The Barclay brothers' former company went bankrupt owing £265,000 to HM Revenue & Customs despite having enough cash to pay off the debt.

Shop Direct Holdings, the former parent company of Very Group, appointed a voluntary liquidator in July after Carlyle, the American private equity firm, took control of the retail business.

The company had a large unpaid debt to HMRC despite having cash of £480,648, which insolvency practitioners will now use to pay off the bill, according to The Telegraph.

Aidan Barclay and Howard Barclay, the former owners of The Telegraph,

resigned as directors of Shop Direct before it was placed into liquidation.

The two brothers faced bankruptcy proceedings from HSBC in the High Court this year but were able to secure a settlement agreement with the bank. They have agreed a payment plan with the lender, but the terms of the deal have not been disclosed.

Carlyle is now seeking to sell Very Group for a possible £2 billion, appointing bankers at Barclays and JP Morgan to run the auction. Elliott Advisors, the investment firm, and JD.com, the Chinese ecommerce group, are said to be interested in purchasing the retailer, which sells clothes, toys and household appliances to customers with buy-now-pay-later finance.

Where creative thinking breeds commercial hits

THE TIMES
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DESIGN



Arts graduates are turning their best ideas into business ventures, write **Jess Jones** and **Naomi Ackerman**

When Elissa Brunato opened up US Vogue to see the supermodel Cara Delevingne wearing a jumpsuit covered in her company's biodegradable sequins, it was a "crazy" moment. Brunato, 37, is the founder of

Radiant Matter, a materials innovation start-up that makes shiny materials without using plastic, artificial dyes or metal finishes.

Founded in 2020, the company has patented a nature-inspired process that sees cellulose nanocrystals — which are extracted from plant-based products like woodchip — engineered to refract light and create different colour effects. This process was used to create the "BioSequins" seen on Delevingne's jumpsuit.

Brunato said: "Nature creates colour without pigments: butterflies, beetles, peacock feathers, they all use microscopic structures that manipulate light ... We engineer cellulose to create this tiny nanoarchitecture that then refracts light and creates this beautiful glittering property." She is one of many founders to spin a business out of the University of the Arts London (UAL), which includes Central Saint Martins and the London College of Fashion among others.

Data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (Hesa) in May ranked UAL first for student start-ups for the fourth consecutive year. It spawned nearly 500 businesses in 2024-25 launched by students or recent alumni, accounting for more than one in ten of all student start-ups to come from UK universities. UAL also topped the rankings for active firms originating from student businesses, with 958 ventures still operating.

Creative thinking and commercial ambition go hand in hand, according to Gavin Clark, director of enterprise at UAL, although he recognises this association is often underestimated.

"People assume that the creative sector is all landscape painting and pottery," Clark said. "But [it] is much more than that. It's IT, it's software, it's advertising, marketing, it's film, TV, publishing, it's music performance, it's architecture, it's design and fashion."

Britain's creative industries contribute about 5.5 per cent of UK gross value added to the economy, rivaling major sectors such as construction, and are growing faster than the wider economy, according to the government. Ministers have made the creative industries a key pillar of its industrial strategy, committing at least £500 million over three years to support innovation, research and development across the UK.

Innovation is a skill Clark believes makes many arts graduates natural entrepreneurs, particularly when it comes to user-focused design. "They're good at considering what the customer actually needs and often extremely good at communicating it."

Companies founded by current students and recent graduates at UAL secured more than £50,000 in external investment during the past academic year. **Chamiah Dewey**, 27, won a number of early grants and awards totalling about £32,000 from UAL for her eponymous clothing business and has received around £20,000 from angel investors.

She first thought about adaptive fashion — clothing designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities or mobility limitations — after she met someone with dwarfism while studying at London College of Fashion. It had "a big impact" on her. "I'm petite myself, I'm 5ft 2in, so I



Chamiah Dewey, who studied at the

know what that's like," she said. "I'd never really thought about it on the extreme scale and it stuck with me."

It inspired her to design everyday clothes that petite women "can actually wear" for Dewey Clothing, the label she founded in 2021.

Her fledgling brand "took off" on social media, where it gained more than 1,000 followers within a month.

After a bridal collection she designed modelled by women under 4ft 4in went viral at London Fashion Week, Dewey made the conscious decision to turn the idea into a commercial business, starting with jeans, the most requested item.

The brand now counts the Paralympic swimmer Ellie Simmonds and the *Strictly Come Dancing* star Jowita Przystal as ambassadors and has since also expanded into sportswear and leisurewear.

Another of the UAL entrepreneurs is **Antoinette Oni**, 31, whose Cheshire-based company creates "bio-based" thermal and acoustic insulation boards made entirely from wheat straw designed to be used in the construction industry. Oni launched Agreka Build in 2024 after she focused her MA project at

Every one-man band

needs a support act

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WICKI COUCHMAN FOR THE TIMES



London College of Fashion, was inspired to set up her own clothing brand making everyday clothes for petite women

Central Saint Martins on how regenerative farming waste could be used to build climate-adaptive buildings in northern Nigeria.

Agreka Build's "Wheatex" boards stand out from rival products, Oni says, because they don't contain any form of synthetic or mineral binder, which means they can be recycled and will eventually biodegrade.

"This is what sets us apart," she said. "We found a way — a patent-pending process — to be able to allow the [straw] fibres to self-bind. That's completely unique." Used at scale, the company says Wheatex boards could help reduce sector emissions while insulating homes.

Another founder, **Jen Keane**, has also created a new kind of material. She is the co-founder and chief executive of Modern Synthesis, a biotech company creating new materials from natural organisms to replace the synthetic textiles used in many fashion accessories and footwear. It aims to eventually expand into automotive interiors too.

"We want to displace as much of the polyurethane and PVC materials as we can," says Keane, a former material creative lead at Adidas. "We

have a trajectory to be able to do that in the millions of tonnes in the next few years."

The business literally grew out of Keane's master's project, called "This Is Grown", at Central Saint Martins. She grew a shoe upper using a bacteria that produces something called bacterial nanocellulose, which lends the material a translucent, woven-like appearance.

Modern Synthesis is now working with major global brands and has already helped Ganni, the Danish fashion label, design a handbag that looks like leather but is actually grown from microscopic organisms.

"We're not trying to be leather," Keane said. "It's about creating this new class of natural materials that can sit beside leather in the short term, but longer term start to displace some of the harmful effects of some of those other materials."

A final UAL graduate, **Namita Bhatnagar**, has similarly used natural ingredients as the foundation of her business. The 28-year-old entrepreneur is the founder of the London-based company Low Tide Labs, which is developing eco-friendly skincare products. Bhatnagar moved

to London from India in 2021 to study for a biodesign master's at Central Saint Martins, where she investigated living materials made from bacterial cellulose and microalgae.

She soon learned that the algae had properties that made them highly effective at skin repair and the idea for Low Tide Labs was born.

"I thought it was just a very under-discussed organism in daily life," Bhatnagar said. "You can grow it anywhere ... And it does so much heavy lifting in terms of the oxygen that's produced for the Earth."

She spent 18 months working to create a skincare product, doing experiments with different algae species at the Central Saint Martins lab and in her kitchen.

The business has finalised two products — a face wash and a lotion — and plans to start selling later this year. "We're growing our own algae to make our own ingredients," Bhatnagar said. "It's like farm-to-table, but for skincare."

Longer-term, Bhatnagar plans to set up "algae tanks" in public places and to branch into haircare products and algae-based food and nutrition in both the UK and India

Every new hire needs their own Burnham bounce

Caroline Plumb



There is plenty in the news at the moment about leadership transitions. After seven prime ministers in a decade, you might hope the process of setting up a new inhabitant of No 10 Downing Street to achieve success would be well-established. Self-evidently, that has not been the case.

In any role, helping a new leader to succeed is not really about the early meetings — whether that is visiting the King or less high-profile new colleagues. It is about creating the conditions that allow a leader to lead. Anyone who has joined a business in a senior role — or recruited for one — knows that this can easily go very well, or very badly, very quickly.

It is always a risk appointing senior roles, whether that is a new team leader or, it appears, cabinet ministers. There are certain elements you have to get right. First there is the job specification, which too often is dismissed as a peripheral concern.

Advertising the role in the right places and to the right people is important, but the real power in the right specification is thinking not only about the role being recruited for but the wider organisation too. Making a senior appointment is a bit like solving a jigsaw puzzle: the piece has to fit with the pieces around it.

Then there is the screening process. How do you ensure you see the best candidates, not those most desperate for the job? It is obvious, but the key to embedding a good leader and giving them the greatest chance of succeeding is to get the selection right. Recruitment errors are common and costly; maybe one in four at a senior level are not right.

One of the common mistakes in business, and perhaps in politics, is to make selection too informal, then weight too much towards technical skills as opposed to leadership ones.

The temptation to elevate a star performer is easy to understand. If there is a brilliant salesperson or a software engineering genius in the team, they can feel like the logical pick for a senior role. Yet just because someone excels at a certain skill does not mean they will make a good manager. There are examples of this mistake being made from tiny family businesses through to giant listed multinationals.

However, if you have an internal candidate who is not only strong personally but also has the leadership skills to deliver, then a "step-up" is a strong choice.

After your new senior hire starts, there are key activities to smooth their initial period in the job. It can be especially tough for someone

who has moved from being a peer to the person approving holidays and having tough conversations around underperformance.

That is why it is so important to immediately legitimise the selection. A formal announcement often helps, but many issues can be avoided if the set-up is right before day one. Here it pays to be explicit and public. What are the responsibilities and the limits of power? What decisions and outcomes are they now accountable for, but — critically — what are they not? Being clear on these things can make or break a business leader.

When embedding your new senior appointment, it is a delicate balance of providing sufficient coaching and guidance to help them navigate the organisation and avoid potholes, but at the same time leaving enough time and space for them to deliver, take risks and approach problems in ways that are different. Too much steer may stifle the fresh ideas and innovation they will bring; too little and you risk error, drift and delay.

Ultimately, once in position, a new senior appointment needs time to bring their vision to bear. Most "100-day plans" so favoured in interview processes are, rightly, heavy on listening and learning. However, you must expect a senior

candidate to quickly grasp any issues and start acting early in their tenure. They have not been hired to be passive.

Everyone wants to show a few quick wins and ensuring there are some ready for the new appointment to deliver is a great way to help establish them as a leader. But to expect substantial change

overnight is to set the stage for failure.

Many high-impact investments — from overhauling technology systems to rethinking social care — require bold decision-making and a long-term perspective. It is quite rare for these decisions to pay off in the short or even medium term.

But it is incumbent on the new leader from the start to manage expectations, communicate well and demonstrate what success will look like. If there is a lag to seeing the end result, then identifying and communicating leading indicators is critical. These might be found in customer feedback, new sales or views from frontline teams (but probably not public opinion). The best leaders find that magical balance between a steady supply of green shoots and reaching ambitious milestones.

For long-term transformational outcomes, both organisations and public opinion need patience and belief. For successive governments, these qualities have been in short supply in recent years — unlike prime ministers.

Caroline Plumb is a serial entrepreneur and chief executive of Amtivo, which delivers ISO and industry certification services

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Clearing the way for a few quick wins is a great way to establish them as a leader

Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
Automobiles & Part					
355,16	Aston Martin Lag	35	-	½	... -0.7
Banking & Finance					
4,428.83	Aberdeen Group	240½	-	7½	6.1 11.1
2.08	Acuity RM	0½	...	-3.4	
11,553.80	Admiral	3772	+ 184	5.4	15.3
2,317.69	AJ Bell	587½	-	8½	2.5 22.9
57,163.10	AOL Corp	26947½	-	111½	0.9 ...
139.24	Arbutnot	840	+ 12½	6.5	7.7
1,471.10	Ashtore Group	206½	+ ½	8.2	17.0
58,727.20	Australia & NZ	1947½	+ 34½	5.8	19.2
20,812.10	Aviva	693½	+ 2½	5.7	25.8
154,238.00	Banco Santander	1050	+ 38	1.6	13.5
68,708.60	Barclays	508½	- 16½	2.3	11.6
2.30	Blue Star Capital	4½	...	-2.3	
242.69	BP Marsh & Ptns	676	-	3	5.4 5.1
2,826.82	Bridgepoint Grp	320½	+ 3	3.0	64.1
794.87	Chesnara	344	+ 3½	6.5	-68.1
240.23	City of London Grp	476	-	2	6.9 16.0
641.44	Close Bros	425½	+ 4½	...	-6.4
1,864.37	CMC Markets	667	-	56	2.1 24.3
51,968.50	Deutsche Bank	2720	+ 118½	3.1	30.1
1,066.98	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	74½	-	½	0.9 ...
55.37	EPE Special Opps	211	-	3	... 8.7
7.99	Fiske	67½	...	1.7	5.9
87.74	Foreseight Ventures VCT	83	...	4.3	15.5
1,338.84	Georgia Capital	3955	-	215	... 2.5
70.15	Hansard Global	51	-	½	8.7 39.2
155.83	Hellas U/W	223	...	4.5	7.7
5,804.04	Hiscox	1809	-	31	2.1 12.3
270,813.00	HSBC	1576	+ 23½	3.5	17.5
4,854.46	IG Group	1460	-	245	2.9 10.1
139.24	Imax Asset Mgmt	109½	+ 1½	9.1	6.9
5,256.34	ICG	1888	+ 22	4.6	11.3
5,772.30	Intl Personal Fin	249½	+ 1	...	10.1
2542.11	Intl Publ P'ship	142	+ 2½	6.2	-31.8
4,517.58	Investec	649	+ 15	5.9	8.4
10.13	Investment Co	75	...	...	...
590.38	IP Group	62½	-	4½	2.0 8.6
3.58	Jarvis Securities	8	...	43.8	2.5
819.63	Jupiter Fund Mgmt	158	-	5	3.8 8.2
1,470.16	Lancashire Hldgs	602½	-	50	2.8 6.7
16,699.30	Legal & General	300½	+ ½	7.3	30.1
5,002.29	Lion Finance Group	11610	-	90	3.2 6.1
178.84	Liontrust Asset Mgmt	284	-	10	6.7 18.4
60.69	Livemore Inv Grp	36½	...	½	6.6 16.5
66,689.60	Lloyds Banking	114½	+ 1½	3.5	16.4
12.55	LMS Capital	15½	-	½	25.7 ...
41,008.10	London Stock Exchange	398	-	376	1.9 35.2
8,615.79	M&G	357½	+ 1½	5.7	28.4
3,461.18	Man Group	380½	+ 4½	4.2	26.4
30.12	Manx Financial Grp	24½	-	1	2.1 4.5
12.22	Marchale Capital	4½	...	...	-34.8
1,192.28	Metro Bank	177	-	2½	... 22.7
67,243.00	National Australia	2157	+ 39½	4.1	18.7
56,180.00	NatWest Group	705½	+ 29½	5.0	13.2
368.01	PayPoint	617	+ 4½	6.5	10.4
27,946.50	Prudential	1116	+ 20	1.8	9.7
5,791	Quantum Blockchain	0½	...	...	-1.9
2,641.29	Quilter	193½	-	1½	3.3 21.7
1,509.37	Rathbone Group	1668	...	6.0	15.5
192.88	Rockwood Strategic	316	-	4	...
236.33	S & U	1945	...	5.9	10.0
12.49	Sancus Lending	1½	...	...	-7.2
218.14	Schroder REIT	44½	-	1½	8.0 ...
9,479.04	Schroders	588½	...	3.7	17.3
5,451.82	St James's Place	1053½	-	17½	1.7 10.5
47,940.10	Standard Chart	42188	+ 51	2.4	15.1
9,292.06	Standard Life	923	+ 6½	6.0	-19.0
34,330.70	Sun Life Canada	6196	+ 15½	3.3	...
15.40	Tavistock Invs	3½	...	3.2	2.6
2,681.57	TBC Bank Grp	4812	+ 50	5.4	6.7
12.68	Tern	1½	+ ½	...	-1.6
36.44	Time Finance	50½	...	...	-7.9
47.72	Toorn	0½	...	...	-1.6
2.39	Truested	3	...	...	-5.4
199.81	Vanguis Banking Grp	77½	-	41½	...
159.89	Volvo	2100	-	50	...
194,282.00	Wells Fargo	642½	-	51½	2.3 ...
67,600.90	Westpac Bk Grp	1976½	+ 29	4.1	18.9
9.58	Worsley Investors	28½	...	½	...
85,529.50	Zurich Insurance	5657½	-	621½	4.9 19.3
Construction & Property					
82.20	Alumas	227½	+ 10	4.9	8.8
13.99	Assana Properties	4½	...	...	-1.2
5.98	Built Cybernetics	1½	+ ½	...	-19.0
4,125.11	Balfour Beatty	862½	-	16½	1.6 16.4
4,124.13	Barratt Redrow	293½	-	1½	5.8 21.6
2,245.93	Belway	1988	+ 9	3.6	15.0
3,209.62	Berkeley	3500	+ 68	...	-10.6
1,747.05	Big Yellow Grp	887½	-	2	5.3 ...
55,640	Billington Hldgs	412½	-	7½	2.7 38.7
204.53	Boat (Henry)	152	+ 1	5.2	8.6
1,148.87	Breedon	331	+ 16	4.6	13.7
...	...	...	...	...	...
4,530.22	British Land	442	+ 3½	5.2	...
27.25	Cardiff Property	2750	...	1.1	20.7
2,331.09	Derwent London	2104	+ 66	3.9	...
41.61	DDI Advisors	4½	...	...	-2.7
17.74	First Property	12	+ ½	2.1	6.6
3.24	Fletcher King	37½	...	6.0	25.3
116.24	Forstons Group	39½	+ ¾	3.0	9.1
595.41	Galliford Try Hldgs	590	-	3	10.4
158.93	Genuit Group	271½	+ 1	4.8	14.9
1,810.50	Gleeson (MJ)	272	+ ½	4.0	10.0
1,810.50	Grafton Grp Units	965½	+ 22½	3.9	13.7
1,294.11	Grainger	174½	-	3½	4.8 6.4
1,147.60	Great Portland Est	349	+ 4	2.3	0.0
2,932.41	Hammerston	382	+ 15½	4.8	...
426.35	Harworth Group	130½	+ 3½	1.4	45.0
6.46	Heath (Samuel)	255	-	45	5.1 31.9
231.35	Helical	199	+ 3	1.3	41.2

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E	
367.96	Ibstock	93½	-	½	3.2 ...	
499.69	James Halstead	120	+ 1½	7.4	12.4	
2,095.16	Keller	3024	-	274	2.3 14.9	
12,049.70	Kingspan Group	668½	...	0.7	21.1	
5,256.31	Land Securities	705½	+ 12	5.8	...	
4,612.63	LondonMetric Prop	196½	+ 1½	6.3	...	
3.85	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6¼	+ ½	...	-0.4	
409.30	Marshalls	161½	+ 10½	4.1	28.4	
70.77	Michelmsh Brd	77	-	1½	6.0 19.2	
2.24	Mindflair	0½	...	...	-1.3	
2,127.90	Morgan Sindall	4430	-	76	3.7 11.9	
331.42	Mountview Estates	8500	-	225	6.2 16.3	
352.08	NewRiver REIT	81½	-	½	8.2	
28.40	Palace Capital	180	...	8.3	40.0	
51.22	Panther Securities	296	...	4.1	12.1	
3,556.14	Persimmon	1107	...	5.4	12.4	
0.99	Plaza Centers	14½	...	...	-0.1	
2,451.32	Primary Health Pross	94½	-	½	7.7 ...	
53.68	Real Estate Inv	30½	-	½	4.9 -61.4	
1,344.81	Safestore	615½	...	5.0	...	
1,346.40	Savills	920	+ 2	3.7	12.7	
...	Secure Prop Dev & Inv	0½	...	...	-0.1	
13,067.00	Segro	965	-	14	3.3 ...	
2,818.40	Shaftesbury Capital	143½	+ 1½	3.0	7.7	
105.98	SIG	84½	...	½	-1.6	
1,373.50	SigmaRox	123½	-	1½	...	16.9
1,574.28	Sirius Real Estate	99	+ ½	5.5	7.6	
43.55	Smart (U)	112½	...	2.9	8.6	
48.18	Steppe Cement	22	...	...	-19.6	
2,721.63	Taylor Wimpey	78	-	4½	5.3 27.9	
...	Town Centre	130½	+ 10	3.8	...	
1,178.36	Travis Perkins	554½	+ 4	2.2	-6.7	
4,617.36	Tritax Big Box	170½	-	½	4.9 ...	
2,765.62	Unita Group	538	-	17	7.0 ...	
927.30	Vistry Group	291½	+ 8½	...	6.9	
675.90	Workspace Group	350½	+ 1½	7.4	...	
23.33	Wynnstay Pross	865	...	3.3	12.0	

Consumer Goods						
688.83	AEP Plantations	180	+ 5	3.4	10.5	
11.37	Airc ^o	27½		3.6	10.8	
14,685.20	AB Foods	2087	+ 91½	3.0	14.7	
728.19	Barr (AG)	650	+ 16	2.9	15.4	
96,851.80	British Amer Tob ^o	4570	-	2	5.4	13.0
4,287.00	Burberry Group	1187½	+ 119½			
377.24	C&C Group	101½	-	1½	4.8	
21.91	Capital Metals ^o	4½	-	½		-37.4
42.34	Churchill China ^o	385	-	2½	5.5	9.2
18,259.70	Coca-Cola HBC	5010	+ 140	2.0	22.6	
74.87	Colefax ^o	1480	+ 55	0.4	10.5	
2,905.35	Crawswick	5350	-	130	2.1	18.1
36,393.50	Diageo	1634½	+ 72	3.8	20.8	
1.22	Distile ^o	0				-0.6
847.84	Evans (MJP) ^o	1626	-	94	3.7	10.1
66.55	Fevara	128½	-	14	1.9	5.6
6,318.17	Games Workshop	19120	-	820	3.0	30.6
4,718.44	Glanbia	1975	+ 2½	1.9	36.3	
2,093.30	Greencore	260½	+ 13½	1.0	19.7	
5.64	Headlam	7	+ ½			-0.1
538.84	Hilton Food	599	+ 50½	5.8	6.8	
21,758.80	Imperial Brands	2825	+ 2	5.9	11.3	
11,176.30	Kerry Group	7044½	+ 214½	1.8	20.6	
283.18	McBride	163	+ 7½	1.8	8.4	
111.16	Mulberry Group	157½	+ 12½			-21.1
387.64	Nichols ^o	1060	+ 80	3.7	18.1	
285.16	Norcross ^o	316	+ 2	3.6		
394.06	Origin Ents ^o	366		4.0	8.6	
0.32	PACSC ^o	0½				-0.0

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
25.59	Portmeirion♦	50	-	1	...
26.86	Provenix♦	1½	...	...	-57.2
475.03	PZ Cussons	110½	+ 4½	3.2	-80.3
47.99	REA	109½	+ 1½	...	-20.5
9.93	Tandem♦	180	+ 10	1.7	11.6
53.26	The Character Grp♦	307	+ 3	2.3	-45.5
2.38	Ukrprod Grp♦	6	...	...	-34.0
102,177.00	Unilever	4743	+ 167½	3.4	12.8
74.98	Victoria♦	65	- 1½	...	-0.2
Engineering					
0.41	Assoc Brit Eng	20	...	...	-6.9
516.21	Avon Technologies	1706	- 48	1.1	65.8
5,523.91	Babcock	1121	...	0.7	26.6
62,904.40	BAE Systems	2094	+ 123	1.8	30.4
12.00	Braime A N/V♦	1250	...	1.3	6.6
10.80	Braime Group♦	2250	+ 150	0.7	11.9
10.91	Caffyns	400	...	2.5	-9.8
8.41	Cap XX Ltd♦	0½	- ½	...	-3.5
127.44	Castings	293	- 18	6.3	16.9
19.98	Checkit♦	18½	- 1	...	-7.1
1,606.91	Chemring Group	590½	- 6	1.4	33.2
13.15	Chesterfield Spec Cyls♦	34	...	...	-37.8
576.92	Cohort♦	1226	- 64	1.5	23.5
191.12	Dialight	473	- 37	...	...
2.65	Feedback♦	6	- ½	...	-0.2
333.92	Gooch & Housego♦	1220	...	1.1	89.1
1,300.66	Goodwin	17320	- 1280	1.6	52.9
13,401.50	Halma♦	3530	- 84	0.7	25.8
2,235.46	Hill & Smith	2850	- 180	1.9	27.8
2.87	Image Scan♦	2½	...	...	-30.8
7,010.48	IMI	2936	- 114	1.2	23.6
304.39	Judges Sci♦	4570	- 20	2.5	55.3
10.65	LPA♦	81	- 1½	...	-30.7
5,661.13	Melrose	454½	- 16½	1.7	15.7
625.29	Morgan Advanced	226	+ 1	5.4	30.1
97.74	Mpa♦	325	+ 8	...	-30.2

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price	Wtdly (p)	Yld%	P/E
29.04	Bezan Resources	0%	...	10.5	
159,251,00	BHP Group	3134 + 3	3.3	23.7	
97.87	Border & Sihn Pet	11½ - 1¼	...	-93.4	
45.00	Bougainville	11½ - 7%	...	-16.6	
86,758.50	BP	552½ + 4½	4.5	-	
2.34	Buccaneer Energy	0	...	-0.8	
27.16	Cadence Minerals	4%	...	-9.3	
9.42	Cadogan Energy	3½	...	-11.2	
268.76	Caledonia Mining	1390 - 5	3.0	6.6	
44.77	Caspian Sunrise	1%	...	3.5	
261.95	Cent Asia Metals	147½ - 5½	8.1	-4.7	
44.44	Chariot Ltd	1½	...	-	
1.56	Chorlton Energy	0	...	-6.3	
33.42	Concor	0%	...	-2.1	
7.52	Crim Therapeutics	9½	...	-1.9	
1,315.76	DRD Gold	152½ - 5½	2.7	13.0	
6.66	ECR Minerals	0%	...	-3.1	
3.43	Empyrean Energy	0	...	-0.4	
8,510.71	Endeavour	3522 - 85	3.8	16.9	
445.74	EnQuest	23½ - 3½	3.4	-	
73.79	Eurasia Mining	2½	...	16.7	
22.37	Euroopa Oil & Gas	1%	...	-8.5	
170.95	Ferropol	28½	...	-4.5	
10,239.10	Fresnillo	2475 - 71	3.8	17.7	
129.27	Galantas Gold	20½	...	-5.5	
13.50	GCM Resources	3½ + ½	...	-	
4.69	Gem Diamonds	3%	...	-0.1	
4.43	Getech	2½ + ½	...	-6.9	
63,737.20	Glencore	543 + 5½	2.3	-	
5.86	Geo Exploration	0%	...	-4.5	
271,610.30	Gold Fields	2414½ - 35	4.7	-	
30.49	Golfdelt	17½ - ¼	3.0	29.6	
11.32	Goldstone Res	0%	...	-0.9	
3,481.28	Greatland Resources	516 - 28	...	15.6	
511.20	Griffins Mining	295 - 13	...	-32.8	
371.56	Gulf Keystone	170½ - 6	7.4	33.0	
2,219.37	Hochschild	443½ - 13½	1.0	14.9	
675.54	Hunting	493½ - 33	2.2	22.8	
4.35	Ironvelo	0%	...	-2.1	
705.92	ITM Power	102½	...	-13.8	
81.09	Jubilee Metals	2½ + ½	...	-3.4	
1.33	Kare Diamond Res	0%	...	-3.9	
147.36	KEFI Gold and Copper	1½	...	-9.7	
176.87	Kenmare Res	198 + 6	...	-0.7	
6.70	Landore Res	1%	...	-1.8	
1.91	Landsdowne Resources	0%	...	-1.2	
13.51	Lexington Gold	2½	...	-29.5	
376.26	Metals Exploration	12½ - ½	...	16.1	
2.11	Netivo Resources	0%	...	-0.1	
6.61	Nestrum Oil & Gas	4	...	-0.0	
16.65	Orlote Resources	0%	...	-17.0	
...	Ormonde Mining	...	...	...	
58.82	Orsur Mining	14½ - 1½	...	...	
2,245.06	Pan African Res	92½ - 2½	2.4	17.3	
176.84	Pantheon Res	12½ - ¾	...	-83.0	
23.49	Parkmead Group	21½	...	3.2	
21.77	Petra Diamonds	6½ - 7%	...	-0.2	
1.77	Petrol Resources	0%	...	-4.0	
18.59	Petro Metal	1 - ½	...	-4.5	
5.44	Plexus Holdings	3%	...	-1.2	
395.28	Porvair	850 + 28	0.8	21.6	

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price	Wtdly (p)	Yld%	P/E
12.58	Prosper Energy	2%	...	-4.3	
21.45	Quadrise	1%	...	-5.8	
10.59	Reabold Resources	73 - 4	...	-102.5	
1.96	Red Rock Res	0	...	-0.3	
33,100.20	Rio Tinto Ltd	8902½ + 513	3.9	16.8	
90,037.00	Rio Tinto	7174 + 305	4.8	15.7	
24.57	Rome Resources	0%	...	-15.7	
190.77	Serabi Gold	250 - 12	2.0	4.7	
924.40	Serika Energy	235½ - 22	6.8	-24.3	
188,151.00	Shell	3383½ + 78	4.5	15.0	
4.17	Shuka Minerals	2½ - ½	...	-2.1	
3.48	Star Energy	1½ - ½	...	-1.4	
47.21	Sund Energy	24½ + 3½	...	-4.4	
7.08	Sunda Energy	1½ + ½	...	-1.6	
1.31	Sunrise Resources	0	...	-2.3	
1.40	Synergia Energy	0	...	0.4	
5.01	Tertiary Minerals	0%	...	-7.0	
5.41	Thor Energy	0%	...	-0.6	
149,074.00	Total Eng SE	6533½ + 53%	4.6	12.8	
7.06	Tower Resources	0	...	-0.4	
231.50	Tollow Oil	15½ + 1	...	-51.4	
3.47	UK Oil & Gas	0	...	-0.2	
3.83	URU Metals	4 - ½	...	-2.7	
6.00	Vast Resources	0%	...	-0.5	
4.61	Westmount Energy	3½	...	-8.4	
14.87	Xitrac Resources	1½ + ¼	...	-5.4	
73.53	Zephyr Energy	3½ - ¾	...	-8.1	

Professional & Support Services

11,660.14	4imprint	4118 + 170	4.4	13.7	
236.50	Andrews Sykes	565 - 20	4.6	13.1	
171.06	BTG Consulting	106	4.3	20.0	
9,088.58	Bunzl	2802 + 44	2.6	19.9	
312.35	Capita	258½ + 22	...	-1.8	
8.51	CEPS	40½	...	-11.5	
41.38	Christie Group	156 + 10	2.2	30.7	
40,067.70	Compass	2356½ + 83%	2.2	28.8	
9.27	Cona Security	67½ - 2½	3.6	11.8	
5,407.35	DCC Energy	6330 + 45	3.4	-	
16.90	Diales Grp	32	4.7	24.6	
9,832.03	Diploma	7320 - 200	0.9	53.1	
754.51	DiscoverIE	775 + 36	1.7	25.7	
295.81	Essentra	104½ + 8½	2.0	-	
24,752.10	Experian	2790 + 46	1.9	22.8	
16.59	FBI Group	132½ - 20	5.1	-3.2	
244.41	Hargreaves Servs	796 + 16	5.0	8.5	
8,989.62	Intertek	5840 + 20	2.8	26.8	
1,878.55	Int'l Workplace	197½ - 2½	0.5	...	
548.75	Johnson Service	150½ + ½	3.2	16.2	
84.22	Journal	476½ - 3½	...	19.6	
1,047.07	Kier Group	239½ + ¼	3.3	18.7	
213.19	Latham (J)	1057½ - 17½	3.5	11.4	
51.24	London Security	3600 + 50	2.7	18.6	
243.27	LSI Property Servs	245 + 2	4.7	14.8	
114.05	Macfarlane	73½ + 6½	5.0	18.4	
13.58	Maintel Holdings	72½	...	-6.1	
7.03	Malvern Intl	21	...	-2.8	
358.75	Mears Group	431 - 3½	4.1	7.7	
597.10	Michael Page	181½ + 1½	4.7	62.7	
2,693.49	Mitie Group	207 - 2½	2.2	31.4	
7.18	MobilityOne	6½	...	-2.1	
10.37	Newmark Security	110	...	-15.6	
3.76	Norman Broadbent	195 + 7½	...	-6.1	
16.16	Northern Bear	117½ + ½	6.4	3.9	
69.19	NWF Group	139½ - 1½	6.2	7.5	

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price	Wtdly (p)	Yld%	P/E
40.57	PCI-PAL	56 + 12½	...	...	
6.22	Petards	10½	...	-15.3	
0.80	PHSC	7½	...	-2.6	
11.32	PowerHouse Energy	0%	...	-3.2	
87.78	Record	44½ - ½	8.2	11.2	
710.10	Renew Holdings	897 - 32	2.3	14.5	
8,709.79	Rentokil	344½ - 81½	2.7	24.9	
401.18	Restore	298 + 17	2.4	-63.4	
4.47	River Global	2½	...	-0.3	
26.30	Roebuck Food Group	26	...	-9.0	
3,302.02	RS Group	701½ + 19	3.3	20.3	
11.30	RTC Group	90	7.5	6.4	
357.62	RWS Holdings	96½ + 13%	6.6	-3.6	
4.47	Science Group	585 - 2	1.7	7.8	
2,357.51	Serco	241½ + 1	1.9	16.8	
180.79	Smiths News	73 + 4	7.6	6.2	
61.44	Software Circ	15½ - ¼	...	-75.0	
50.46	Staffline Group	43½ + 1½	...	11.2	
313.01	SThree	255½ + 16½	5.6	18.6	
32.92	Synectics	185	2.7	8.4	
2.92	Thurivision Group	0%	...	-0.6	
134.73	Tribal	63	2.1	15.0	
18.76	Vianet	66 - ½	3.6	46.2	
1,058.38	ZIGUP	462½ + 8	5.8	13.7	

Retailing

553.42	AO World	97½ + 5%	...	15.3	
2,237.20	B&M European	222½ + 9%	4.3	13.7	
256.00	Card Factory	75½ + 5	6.6	8.4	
856.90	CVS Group	1252 + 56	0.7	17.0	
333.94	DFS Furniture	141½ + 2½	0.7	13.5	
1,752.77	Dunelm	869½ + 2	8.1	11.3	
3,628.62	Fraser's Group	810½ + 45½	...	9.3	
1,922.41	Greggs	1880 + 298	3.7	15.7	
532.00	Halfords	243 + 7	3.7	16.0	
4,316.64	Howden Joinery	788½ + 22½	2.8	16.0	
2,927.63	Inchcape	838½ + 13	4.0	11.6	
1.48	Imaging Biometrics	0%	...	-3.5	
4,302.61	JD Sports	89½ + ½	1.3	10.4	
5,099.13	Kingsfisher	308½ + 9%	4.0	22.0	
3,373.16	Marks & Spencer	405½ + 24%	1.0	31.9	
3.95	Mothercare	0%	...	-	
47.84	Naked Wines	72½ - 2½	...	-7.8	
17,683.10	Next	1484½ + 60	1.8	19.5	
1,786.39	Occado	211½ + 24%	...	4.5	
935.17	Pets at Home	210½ + 13%	3.5	15.3	
494.93	Pinewood Tech Group	430 + 115	...	89.6	
983.07	Saga	672 + 18	...	...	
1,959.11	Sainsbury's	359½ + 14%	3.8	20.8	
659.29	WH Smith	433½ + 8%	...	-3.4	
29.32	Sosandar	13½ + 1½	...	96.4	
30,670.80	Tesco	409½ + 9%	3.0	17.8	
69.82	Topps Tiles	35½ + 1	8.7	11.6	

Technology

489.06	Alfa Financial	163½ + 2½	5.9	16.1	
106.86	Apitude Software	196 - 5	2.8	26.8	
51.24	Bango	66½ - 1	...	-9.1	
54.84	BATM Adv Coms	12½ - 1½	...	-4.0	
115.14	Berkeley Res	25½ + ½	...	-0.7	
7.20	Blackbird	1%	...	-2.4	
40.86	Celebris Tech	108½	3.1	-10.7	
24.41	Cirata	15	...	-3.4	
1.73	CloudCoCo	0%	...	0.5	
4,885.10	Compucenter	4598 - 192	1.6	31.4	
243.00	Concurrent Tech	267½ - 7½	0.4	45.6	
42.25	Corero	8½ - ¼	...	-11.0	
398.52	Craneware	1164 + 16	2.9	27.9	
5.75	Crimson Tide	87½	...	-3.6	
34.25	CyanConnote Hlps	9½ + ½	...	-8.2	
7.81	Dillistone Group	10½ + ¼	...	-7.4	

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price	Wtdly (p)	Yld%	P/E
3.35	Forgeit	0	...	-0.0	
135.24	FDM Group	123½ + 5	8.1	23.7	
523.46	Filtronic	238 - 21	...	37.1	
505.80	GB Group	221 + 14	2.0	-7.2	
52.71	Illika	26½ - 2½	...	-6.6	
8.78	Ingent	60½ - ½	7.4	5.0	
64.91	Intercede	107 - 1	...	18.8	
13.80	Iomart	12½ - ½	...	-1.5	
520.43	IQE	39½ - 9%	...	-10.4	
270.74	LG Electronics	1575½ + 90%	1.6	...	
56.91	MTI Wireless	66	3.1	15.2	
4.89	Nanoco Group	2½	...	-2.2	
201.30	Netsol	118	0.8	48.2	
6.64	Northamber	24½ + 2	2.4	-1.7	
42.76	Oxford Metrics	38½ - ¼	8.5	-69.5	
14.05	Pennant Intl	29½	...	-5.9	
1,170.99	Playtech	378½ + 6%	...	0.9	
48.14	Pulsar Group	35½	...	-4.5	
2,613.88	QinetiQ	506 + 16%	2.2	25.2	
99.56	RM	101½ + 6½	...	39.0	
220.81	Seeing Machines	4½ - ½	...	-10.9	
14.77	Shearwater Group	62 + 16½	...	-1.5	
3,799.82	Softcat	1930 + 37	1.6	29.0	
0.69	Sorted Group	9	...	-0.2	
22,738.60	Tele Ericsson	731½ + 28	3.2	11.0	
8,800.48	The Sage Grp	973½ + 115	2.3	25.8	
6.77	Touchstar	85½	3.8	-6.4	
101.99	Tracis	342½ - 21½	0.8	...	
64.56	Triad Group	370 + 10	2.4	37.3	
95.79	Water Intl	307½ + 7%	...	14.4	
10.57	Zoo Digital	10½ + ¼	...	-3.8	

Telecoms

12,093.00	Airtel Africa	333 - 1½	1.6	24.1	
20,064.90	BT Group	201½ + 8%	4.1	18.3	
1,833.57	Currys	167½ + 3%	1.8	10.8	
836.65	Gamma Comm	936 - 4	2.4	13.5	
2,035.94	Hellas Towers	195½ - 7%	0.9	71.2	
22.64	Gana Media	0%	...	-4.0	
664.29	Telecom Plus	851 - 1	5.9	8.4	
27,130.00	Vodafone	117½ + 3%	3.4	-83.5	

Transport

75.39	Braemar	228 + 5
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Obituaries

Nirmal Purja

Record-breaking mountaineer and Gurkha who fought in Afghanistan and was selected to serve with the Special Boat Service

When Sir Edmund Hillary made the first ascent of Everest in 1953 he took a picture of Sherpa Tenzing Norgay but did not think to ask Tenzing to take one of him. Nirmal Purja's picture from 2019 depicting a "conga" of about 300 climbers waiting to step on to the 8,849m summit of Everest, many of them having paid £50,000 for the experience, went viral on social media, prompting anguish about the commercialisation of the world's highest peak.

The Nepalese-born Purja, who fought with the Gurkhas in Afghanistan and saw service with the Special Boat Service, realised that things could go catastrophically wrong on this most exposed stretch of Everest. As people waited, they grew colder and more impatient, using up their oxygen supplies; it was quite literally the worst place to be stuck in a queue. For two hours he took charge, "like a traffic policeman", prioritising the coldest and those who had been waiting the longest while trying to calm the others. "Rather than people fighting over who should go up first, it's better if it is managed systematically," he told *The Guardian*.

Purja was on Everest as part of Project Possible, aiming to climb the world's 14 highest peaks, each more than 8,000m high and in the so-called death zone. He and his team of Sherpas achieved their goal in 189 days, breaking the previous record of seven years, ten months and six days set in 2013. Their feat can be seen in the Netflix documentary *14 Peaks: Nothing is Impossible* (2021). Along the way he rescued three other climbers, including descending from a helicopter rope on Annapurna in the Himalayas to recover Chin Wui Kin, an anaesthesiologist who later died in hospital.

Critics suggested that Purja's use of supplementary oxygen detracted from his achievement. "It isn't exactly alpinism as I understand it," said Stephen Venables, the first Briton to climb Everest without oxygen, adding that "in the history of mountaineering it will only be a footnote." Sir Chris Bonington added that Purja had displayed "supreme athleticism" but did not break new ground, adding: "I don't see this as a major event." Purja subsequently climbed all the peaks without oxygen.

Three years ago Purja and his team became the first to conquer K2 in winter. The peak is so deadly that it is known as Savage Mountain, with many of the 11 victims of a 2008 avalanche still lying in the Bottleneck, a long, steep and narrow gully overhung by a 100m ice cliff. "Passing bodies, you realise some things are beyond planning and skill. Sometimes it's just your day and sometimes it isn't," he observed.

Recalling the Everest queues of 2019, Purja expressed concern about both the environmental damage to the mountain and the ever-growing and under-prepared number of mountaineers. "You could be the best climber in the world, the most adapted human to high altitude," he told *The Times*. "[But] if you are at the back of the line, that is where you are. Your life is in the hands of those in front and their ability to get up and down."

Nirmal Purja, known as Nimsdai or Nims, was the fourth of five children born to a family in the mountain village



Purja, above on Nanga Parbat, took a famous photograph of the queue for the Everest summit. Below, with his wife, Suchi

of Dana, in western Nepal, in 1983. His father, Nanda Bahadur Purja, served with the Gurkhas; his mother, Purna Kumari, was a farmworker, often toiling with a child strapped to her back. "We came from a really poor family," he told *National Geographic*. "As a kid I remember I didn't even have flip-flops."

He was four when they moved downhill to Ramnagar, a jungle village near Kathmandu, in the hottest and flattest part of the country. "I had plenty of trouble to find: on the streets, in the woods, by the water; the potential for exploration was huge," he wrote. At ten he contracted tuberculosis and was later diagnosed with asthma, but shrugged off both potential limitations.

Two of his brothers, Ganga and Kamal, followed their father into the Gurkhas, sending money home to support Nirmal's education at Small Heaven Higher Secondary, an English-speaking school in Chitwan. There he took on the bullies by practising kickboxing, becoming regional champion. He had another brother, Jit, and a younger sister, Anita.

Purja grew up wanting to be either a Gurkha, like his father and brothers, or a government official. "But I wanted to be Nepal's version of Robin Hood, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor," he said. He chose the former, was selected at his second attempt and in 2003 joined the Gurkha Training Company at Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire, only to be bombarded with questions about Everest. "They looked unimpressed when I admitted I'd not even seen base camp, let alone climbed above it," he said.

In 2006 he married Suchi, who works in dentistry and is the daughter of a Gurkha. They lived in Eastleigh, near Southampton, and she survives him with Himani, their young daughter.

Deployed to Afghanistan in 2007, he

was involved in sweeping vast areas of land for improvised explosive devices with Royal Marines Commandos. He also took part in gun battles and attached L9 bar mines to the doors of enemy compounds. "My job was to creep up to a door, fix the mine, run away and ... boom," he recalled.

His unit patrolled open desert valleys in the baking heat, making their presence known to anyone watching and "checking in with the friendly locals, while taking potshots from the not-so-friendly". The work was stressful but rewarding, he said, adding: "When the weapons went off, the adrenaline surged through me."

Learning of operations elsewhere, including hostage rescues, hard arrests on serious Taliban players and door-kicking raids, all performed by the Special Air Service (SAS) or Special Boat Service (SBS), he wanted "to be one of those guys". In 2009 he became the first

Gurkha to pass selection for the SBS, fitting in by learning British sitcom humour and dirty jokes.

He also learnt to fend off negative thoughts, a technique he later put to use on the mountains. "If you have frostbite or diarrhoea, concentrate on your bad knee instead. Sounds crazy, right? But that's it, think about something worse."

In the SBS Purja specialised as a tra-

'Passing bodies, you realise some things are beyond planning or skill'

ma medic and in July 2010 was deployed on active service, rushing through houses and enemy compounds, coming face to face with dangerous enemy forces, or IED boobytraps. "Kicking in doors was exciting, but terrifying," he recalled.

On one occasion he was shot during a gunfight. "Having taken up a position on a compound roof, firing my weapon while lying flat on my belly, I was struck by something. I wasn't sure by what at first, but it was powerful enough to knock me from the building," he said. Fortunately, the round had only sliced across his face, doing more damage to his rifle butt. He resumed fire with a pistol until the operation concluded and his wound could be patched up.

Meanwhile, he had begun mountaineering, trekking to Everest base camp in 2012 and, despite little experience, climbing the 6,119m Lobuche East. In 2014 he took a diploma in security management at Loughborough University.

Two years later he used a period of leave to make the first of his six climbs of Everest, covering the £50,000 cost by telling the bank that he needed to borrow £15,000 "to buy a car" and draining his savings for the rest. Lack of acclimatisation meant he developed a



pulmonary oedema, excess fluid in the lungs. Embarrassed, he descended to recover before returning and making it to the top. On the way down he rescued an abandoned Indian climber for which he was rewarded with an MBE.

He climbed Everest again in 2017 with a team of Gurkhas as part of G200E, a delayed celebration of their 200th anniversary of service to the British Crown in 2015. While others recuperated, he climbed Mount Lhotse (8,516m) and Mount Makalu (8,485m), the world's fourth and fifth highest peaks. Sensing his desire to move into full-time mountaineering, the SBS promoted him to cold-weather warfare instructor while the SAS tried to lure him with a one-year climbing programme.

However, in 2018 he sacrificed his full military pension, "a life-changing chunk of money", to concentrate on Project Possible, funding himself through sponsorship, notably from Bremont the watch manufacturer, and by remortgaging the family home. "Walking out on such a prestigious career had felt risky, but I was prepared to gamble everything for my ambition," he wrote in his memoir *Beyond Possible* (2020), in which he demonstrates a somewhat unorthodox relationship with fear.

Purja's alpha-male style was sometimes the subject of fierce criticism. Some felt he took his own motivational talks too literally; others that he pushed fellow climbers too hard. One friend in Tibet warned him of jealous rivals, adding: "It takes only one push for you to disappear from the mountain for good."

Two years ago the *New York Times* published lurid allegations against him and other male climbers by several female mountaineers including Lotta Hintsa, a former Miss Finland. Purja denied the allegations, calling them "false and defamatory".

On July 21, 2026, Purja scaled the 8,035m Gasherbrum II in Pakistan without supplemental oxygen, a record 57th ascent of a peak above 8,000 meters. Nine days later he began a spontaneous climb of Broad Peak in Pakistan with a group of fellow mountaineers. "This wasn't planned. But opportunities don't scream: they whisper to those already working in silence," he wrote in typically upbeat manner. Hours later they were caught in an avalanche. He was not heard from again.

Nirmal Purja MBE, special forces serviceman and mountaineer, was born on July 25, 1983. His death after being caught in an avalanche was announced on August 1, 2026. He was 43



Vincent Pastore

Actor who played 'Big Pussy' in The Sopranos TV series, the mobster best friend of Tony Soprano turned FBI informant

At the end of season two of *The Sopranos* in 2000, Vincent Pastore's character, Salvatore "Big Pussy" Bonpensiero, a veteran gangster who runs a car workshop, was taken out for a spin in a boat by Tony Soprano, his best friend. Tony (James Gandolfini) had learnt that Pussy, whose name derived from his former life as a cat burglar, was an FBI informant. They shared a drink and then, to the horror of television audiences everywhere, Tony shot Pussy several times and tossed his body into the ocean.

The scene has gone down in the annals of television history as one of the classic mobster moments, and the storyline was one of the show's most memorable. For the actor it was a tour de force, cementing his character's tough but conflicted image. "I saw Big Pussy as a man with a big heart, and that was my choice of how I played that role," he told *Edge* magazine.

Pastore's roles were often big characters with even bigger, wise-guy personalities. With his stocky build, Schwarzenegger-size shoulders and gruff but loveable demeanour, the actor could identify with many of them, including Angelo Ruggiero, whom he played in *Gotti* (1996) alongside Tony Sirico, Frank Vincent and Dominic Chianese, also future members of *The Sopranos*. "I am Angelo, I am Big Pussy ... Those characters are closer to who I am."

Despite having studied drama, Pastore "came to acting late in life", he said. "So, at first, you take anything they give you." One of his earliest appearances was as the bride's father in Nancy Savoca's Italian marital comedy *True Love* (1989), which won the grand jury prize at the 1989 Sundance Film Festival. He had a small role carrying a coat rack in *Goodfellas* (1990), played a background character in *Carlito's Way* (1993), starring Sean Penn and Al Pacino, alongside his cousin Garry Pastore, and between 1992 and 1996 made several appearances in the NBC television series *Law & Order*.

His tough-guy image was confirmed as Tony Scarboni, the right-hand man

to the powerful local mafia boss Ernie Lazzaro (Alan Arkin) in the comedy crime drama *The Jerky Boys* (1995). Thereafter he rarely objected to being typecast, such as when playing Skippy, who is involved in a plot to siphon funds from banks and credit card companies by hacking into their computer systems via satellite, in *This Thing of Ours* (2002) with Frank Vincent and James Caan.

Indeed, his CV read like a pantheon of the gangster world. TV entries included *Witness to the Mob* (1998), detailing the life of New York Gambino crime family underboss Salvatore

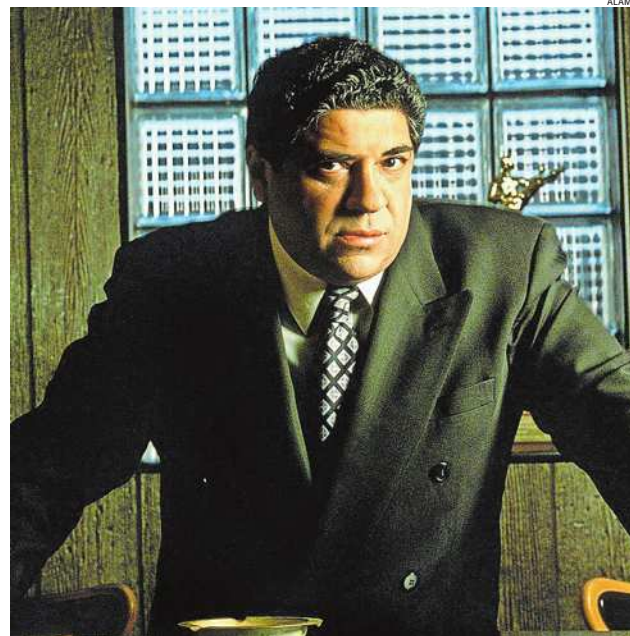
'I saw Big Pussy as a man with a big heart, and that was my choice'

"Sammy the Bull" Gravano, and the documentary *Family Values: The Mob and the Movies* (1999), exploring the real-life American mafia and its relationship with Hollywood.

Pastore rejected suggestions that programmes such as *The Sopranos* and films such as *The Godfather* reduced all Italian-Americans to a cultural stereotype. "It's exaggerated," he said in 2002. "But it's based on stuff that pretty much happens. It doesn't happen to regular people, but it happens."

Vincent Dominic Pastore, a third-generation Italian-American, was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1946, the son of John Pastore, a school caretaker, and his wife, Natalie (née Santadonato). They lived above the Forester's Club and as a child he hung out in Feeney Park and sang in an cappella group called the Crystal Kings.

Although Pastore could identify with some of his characters, he did not grow up with people like them. "We lived in New Rochelle [a suburb of Westchester county] in an Italian neighbourhood. I can still smell the pizza. Roller skating every Friday night at the Boys Club. Great memories. We saw bookies and loan sharks," he said, adding darkly:



Pastore in *Witness to the Mob*, a film about the Gambino crime family, in 1998

"For the record, I never knew any rats."

From New Rochelle High School he served three years in the US navy during the Vietnam war and then studied drama at Pace University, New York. Instead of going into acting he worked as a chauffeur and nightclub bouncer, eventually owning clubs in New Rochelle. One of these inspired Adriana's club, Crazy Horse, on *The Sopranos*, though he claimed to have "lost every penny I had" on that business.

His regular clients included the actor brothers Matt and Kevin Dillon. By day he drove them around New York in a limousine, regaling them with his dreams of becoming an actor. "They ended up seeing me at this community theatre I was doing. Kevin helped me

out. He gave me the direction I needed to finally act," he said. His first appointment with Dillon's agent fell flat. "He said, 'Do a monologue,'" Pastore recalled. "I didn't know what a monologue. It was a wake-up call."

Some of his early work was with Robert De Niro, including as a psychiatric patient in *Awakenings* (1990) and a tiny role in *A Bronx Tale* (1993). "Bobby's been really good to me. He sees you and he likes your work and he pulls you along," he said.

There were also non-gangster roles. He was the owner of a seafood shop in an episode of the TV comedy *Ed*, played a priest in the 1950s crime drama *Deuces Wild* (2002) with Debbie Harry and was a process server in *Serving Sara* (al-

so 2002) with Liz Hurley and Matthew Perry (obituary, October 29, 2023). Yet playing a tough guy proved easier than playing a good one. "I didn't study the classics. I'm a street actor. A lot of my training was on the set," he said.

Although the cigar-smoking Big Pussy was killed off after only two seasons of *The Sopranos*, Pastore continued to appear in flashbacks and dream sequences for the rest of the show's six-season run. Elsewhere he turned up on reality television in Donald Trump's *Celebrity Apprentice* (2008) with Piers Morgan and Lennox Lewis, sang on Broadway, appropriately enough in the musicals *Chicago* (2007) and *Bullets Over Broadway* (2014), and fronted a rock band, Big Pussy and the Gangster Squad. Vincent Pastore's Italian Sauce, made from imported Italian tomatoes, brought a culinary angle to his portfolio, as did his contribution to *Shut Up and Eat!* (2006), an Italian-American cookbook.

He met and married Nancy Berke while working as a bartender in the Lallipoo bar in Westchester. Their marriage was dissolved and he is survived by their daughter, Renee.

In 2005 he was arrested in the Little Italy district of New York after allegations that he had assaulted Lisa Regina, his fiancée, after she made him wait outside her flat for so long that he almost got a parking ticket. Forced to parade in handcuffs, he grumbled to photographers: "This is not the red carpet." He was sentenced to 70 hours of community service and thereafter kept his private life private.

Pastore, who had prostate cancer diagnosed in 2014, was found dead at his home near the beach on City Island, in the northeastern Bronx, where the walls inside were adorned with posters from his shows and films. Friends said that as recently as Thursday he had been discussing plans to see *The Odyssey*.

Vincent Pastore, actor, was born on July 14, 1946. His body was found on August 1, 2026. He was 80

Nigel Cabourn

Designer of 'rugged wear' in the North East who drew on military and expedition history to revive a heavy-duty style

For someone who described himself as "not very bright", Nigel Cabourn produced designs that were remarkably cerebral. He had gone to art college in part because he was dyslexic — in another interview he said it was because there were "200 girls and one guy" — but the clothes Cabourn created when he dropped out to start his first label, Cricket, were heavily rooted in history. He had a library of 3,000 books on the military and expeditions, his two great muses. "I'm like a big giant sieve of history," he said, "and I just turn it into the clothes."

There was the heavy brown tweed jacket inspired by Tenzing Norgay, who accompanied Sir Edmund Hillary in reaching the top of Everest in 1953; Vietnam War-inspired military garb from the US marine corps ("which is all f***ing green with all the f***ing badges which I love"); and "Bombay Bloomers" inspired by his father's time fighting in Burma during the Second World War. "They are big and baggy, and were ideal for soldiers stationed in the desert," he recalled. "I have a great picture of my dad in a pair of Bloomers and it offers me a great deal of inspiration."

A contemporary of Paul Smith, Vivienne Westwood (who once stayed with him in Newcastle) and Margaret Howell, Cabourn chose to stay in the North



Cabourn with models in London, 2017

East, where he had grown up, while his fellow designers based themselves in London. He claimed that he "never sold out to commercialism", though success was up and down "like a snake".

"It's hard to be successful in the North East, but it's a trade-off," he said. "I felt I owed it to my children to stay here. Plus, I design men's outerwear.

You can test it out here on a regular basis."

Still, he became one of the best-known designers in the field of "rugged wear", heavy-duty clothing made from durable material, typically for tradesmen such as construction workers but which Cabourn brought into the mainstream. He liked to create garments from sturdy, weather-proof material such as Ventile, one of the first water-resistant fabrics, Harris Tweed or British oil cloth. He was attracted to their durability — "The old fabrics don't compromise. Those pieces really had to stand what they promise" — and felt that other designers sacrificed quality for style. He was "fabric-driven", which had a tinge of nostalgia. "I am quite an emotional person," he said in relation to his obsession with old material.

There were collaborations with Converse, Vans, Barbour, Liam Gallagher and Fred Perry, "which was great because I got to talk about ping pong, and I love ping pong". There was also one with Sir Paul Smith, who stocked his clothes in his Nottingham store in 1973 and introduced Cabourn to vintage clothing in 1978, when he bought Cabourn an RAF jacket in army green and said, "Nige, you should make army jackets like this."

Cabourn was so excited that he asked

Smith to take him to where he had found his jacket. "He took me to the Porte de Clignancourt, the Paris flea market, and I saw about six vintage collectors there," Cabourn recalled. "I couldn't believe it — the amount of ideas and details that were on vintage pieces. It immediately gave me new inspiration for the rest of my life."

Cabourn, who once said that "military green and navy blue are the only two colours I really wear", did not class himself as a fashion designer. "I don't follow fashion. Everything I design comes from either a moment in history, an inspirational person or a vintage garment." Even if he did not follow trends, he created them. His use of heavy-duty clothes would be mirrored in the 21st-century obsession with making fashion out of blue-collar workman's gear, including brands such as Carhartt and Dickies.

Born in Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, in 1949, Nigel Cabourn grew up in Peterlee, north of Hartlepool. His father, John, was a postmaster and his mother, Edith, worked in the post office. A grandfather regaled him with stories of fighting in the trenches in the First World War, and his father of the jungles of Burma in the second. His interest in war was piqued. In 1984 he married Janet Bell, his company's PR. She survives

him with their three children, Ben, Lucy and Sophie.

In 1962 he moved to Newcastle and, a couple of years later, a friend told him about Newcastle College of Art and Industrial Design, where the number of women drastically outweighed the male students, "and I said, 'That's what I want to do. That sounds great.'" He never graduated. "I knew at 19 that I wanted to run my own business," he recalled, and the principal encouraged him to leave. "I started doing business under my own name in 1971, and called my brand Cricket, like the game. In 1984, I changed the company name from Cricket to Nigel Cabourn because it was a trend in the 1980s to not just have a brand name, but to use your own name." The first jacket he made with Cricket was from his mother's curtains because of a scarcity of material.

When asked later in life about his plans for the future, he replied: "To work until I die ... The key is to do what you love to do ... If you do that, you'll have a long life."

Nigel Cabourn, clothing designer, was born on October 7, 1949. He died of cancer on June 11, 2026, aged 76

Email: obituaries@thetimes.co.uk

Law Report

Scottish prisons' transgender guidance is ruled unlawful

Outer House of the Court of Session
Published: August 3, 2026

Petition of For Women Scotland Ltd

Before Lady Ross
[2026] CSOH 59
Judgment June 19, 2026

Scottish Prison Service Guidance providing that, in some circumstances, it was permissible for biological men to be accommodated within the women's prison estate was unlawful. It was unlawful because it misstated the law.

The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011 ("the rules") provided for the separation of men and women. Following the Supreme Court decision in *For Women Scotland Ltd v Scottish Ministers* ([2025] UKSC 16, 2025 SC (UKSC) 1, The Times, April 20, 2025), the words "woman" and "man" in the prison rules could only mean biological woman and biological man.

Lady Ross so held in the Outer House of the Court of Session when granting the petition for judicial review by *For Women Scotland Ltd*, seeking to have the guidance on the management of transgender prisoners issued by the first respondents, the Scottish Prison Service, an executive agency of the Scottish Ministers, declared unlawful. The second respondent was the Lord Advocate.

Mr Aidan O'Neill KC and Tony Convery for the petitioners; Gerry Moynihan KC and Lesley Irvine for the Scottish

Ministers and Lord Advocate; **Kenny McBrearty KC** and **Rachel Breen** for the Scottish Human Rights Commission (first intervenor); **Janys Scott KC** and **David Anderson** for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (second intervenor).

LADY ROSS said that the proceedings concerned the "SPS Policy for the Management of Transgender People in Custody Operational Guidance" issued in 2024.

The effect of the guidance was that, in the absence of a "violence against women or girls marker", a trans woman prisoner (a biological man) would be considered for admission into the women's estate. Where there was a violence against women and girls marker, there was a presumption, subject to exceptions, that a trans woman prisoner would not be admitted into the women's estate.

The guidance was necessarily premised on an understanding that admitting biological men into women's prisons was lawful.

The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011 ("the rules"), made under the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989, provided for the separation of male and female prisoners.

There was also no real dispute that, as a matter of generality, the reasons for sex segregation in prisons were to protect the safety of women and to secure the privacy and dignity of both

women and men. The statutory requirement was consistent with international standards.

The respondents argued that the guidance was necessary to allow them to comply with their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 not to contravene trans prisoners' rights under Articles 2 (right to life), 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment), 8 (respect for private and family life), and 14 (enjoyment of rights without discrimination). The rules should be read consistently with the respondents' obligations under the 1998 Act.

Her ladyship said that Article 8 was a qualified right. Custody imposed very significant limitations on the private and family lives of all prisoners and also on the ability to express gender identity.

In the custodial setting, accommodating the wish of a trans woman prisoner to live as a woman by a transfer to the female estate entailed association with an identifiable group of other prisoners — women prisoners. There was no obvious parallel outside imprisonment.

At liberty, a trans woman might consider that she could best express her female identity by sharing accommodation with women, and that might be achieved on the basis of consent, but a person, whether male or female, could not be compelled to share the living space needed for essential daily activities such

as eating and washing, with another person.

A trans prisoner could not live in his or her transgender identity in the abstract. Accommodating a trans woman prisoner in the women's estate necessarily involved association with women, and their circumstances were such that they could not opt out. A trans woman's Article 8 rights were already respected in the men's estate by measures including ensuring access to hormone treatment and maintaining privacy and dignity in living arrangements.

Sex segregation in prisons was in accordance with law and was necessary, at least, to protect the rights and freedoms of others, specifically women prisoners. The Supreme Court's decision in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers* ([2025] UKSC 16) made clear that the law on demarcation of separate sex spaces, including within prisons, was based on biological sex. That might be harsh in respect of an individual, but that did not mean that the rule was incompatible with that person's Convention rights.

There were obligations on the respondents in terms of Article 2 to protect life and Article 3 not to subject prisoners to inhuman or degrading treatment, but there was no positive obligation, in general terms, based on Article 2 or Article 3, to accommodate a trans prisoner in a prison for the opposite biological sex.

Schedule 3 of the Equality Act

2010 made an exception to its provisions concerning discrimination, harassment, or victimisation by reason of sex where the person who would otherwise be in breach of those provisions did so when performing a public function in accordance with an enactment. The rules were such an enactment. Applying them did not put the respondents in breach of the Equality Act 2010.

On the basis that the respondents were exercising a public function and that section 29(6) and Schedule 22 of the Equality Act 2010 applied, the question of disapplication of the prison rules might arise. It was possible that, in an exceptional individual case, in a situation where there was a threat to life, it could be necessary to consider an argument that accommodation in a prison for the opposite biological sex was necessary and the rules should be disapplied.

Whether that could be achieved compatibly with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 could not be determined in the abstract. In any event, the possibility of disapplication or disregard of subordinate legislation in some undefined circumstances could not form part of a general policy.

The guidance was unlawful and the petitioner was entitled to a declarator.

Law Agents: **Balfour & Manson LLP; Scottish Government Legal Directorate**; interveners' in-house solicitors.

Births, Marriages and Deaths

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'I GIVE you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' John 13:34-35 (NRSV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Deaths

BOWMAN Yvonne, on 17th July, aged 96. Dearly loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, will be sadly missed. Funeral service on Wednesday 19th August at Holy Trinity Church, Erdridge, TN3 9JG, at 2.00pm. Parking available opposite the church. Family flowers only please but donations may be sent, payable to Hospice in the Weald, Pembury, c/o ER Hickmott & Son, tel: 01892 522462, or direct to Hospice in the Weald.

MCCOWEN Donald William Henry "Bill" died peacefully at home in Virginia on 28th June 2026, aged 89. Beloved husband of Lizzie and father to Kate and Tracey. A thanksgiving service will be held at All Saints, Brighton, on 18th October.

SAXTON Dr Hugh died at home in Stockbridge, Hampshire, on 21st July, aged 98. Thanksgiving service on 17th August at 2pm in Stockbridge. Inquiries to Richard Steel & Partners, 01962 862333.

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Court Circular



Balmoral Castle

1st August, 2026
The King this morning received members of Assynt Mountain Rescue Team at the Castle of Mey, Thurso, Caithness.

His Majesty, Patron, the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society, received Mr Matthew Currie (President) and Mr Robert Gilchrist (Chief Executive Officer) at the Castle of Mey.

Kensington Palace

1st August, 2026

The Prince William, Duke of Rothesay and The Duchess of Rothesay today attended the XXIII Commonwealth Games and were received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the City of Glasgow (Councillor Jacqueline McLaren, the Rt Hon the Lord Provost).

Their Royal Highnesses this afternoon visited Team House for Team Wales, YOTEL Glasgow, 260 Argyle Street, Westergate, Glasgow.

The Prince William, Duke of Rothesay and The Duchess of Rothesay, Patron, SportsAid, afterwards met athletes and staff supported by SportsAid at YOTEL Glasgow.

St James's Palace

1st August, 2026

The Duke of Edinburgh, Vice Patron, Commonwealth Sport, and The Duchess of

Edinburgh today attended the XXIII Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

St James's Palace

1st August, 2026

The Princess Royal, accompanied by Vice-Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, having been received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight (Mrs Susan Sheldon), today carried out the following engagements on the Isle of Wight, on the occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of Cowes Week: Her Royal Highness this morning visited the Royal Yacht Britannia Trust's 'Sailing Through Royal History' Exhibition, 74 High Street, Cowes.

The Princess Royal, Patron, Island Sailing Club, subsequently opened the Queen Elizabeth II Room at the Island Sailing Club, 70

High Street, Cowes.

Her Royal Highness this afternoon visited the 'Panels on the Parade' section of the Maritime Heritage Trail, Cowes, and unveiled a plaque to celebrate the Bicentenary of Cowes Week.

The Princess Royal later visited the offices of Cowes Week Limited, Regatta House, 18 Bath Road, Cowes.

Her Royal Highness afterwards visited Cowes Week Stands on the Parade, Cowes.

The Princess Royal this evening attended a Reception on board HMS Severn at anchor in the Solent, off Cowes.

St James's Palace

2nd August, 2026

The Duke of Edinburgh, Vice-Patron, Commonwealth Sport, and The Duchess of Edinburgh today attended the

XXIII Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

His Royal Highness, Vice Patron, Commonwealth Sport, accompanied by Her Royal Highness, this evening closed the XXIII Commonwealth Games at the Hydro, Scottish Event Campus, Exhibition Way, Glasgow, and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the City of Glasgow (Councillor Jacqueline McLaren, the Rt Hon the Lord Provost).

St James's Palace

2nd August, 2026

The Princess Royal, accompanied by Vice-Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, having been received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight (Mrs Susan Sheldon), today carried out the following engagements on the Isle of Wight, on the occasion of the

Two Hundredth Anniversary of Cowes Week: Her Royal Highness, Admiral, Royal Yacht Squadron, this morning started the first race of the day at Cowes Week, the Castle, the Parade, Cowes.

The Princess Royal later visited East Cowes Sailing Club, Clarence Road, East Cowes.

Her Royal Highness, Admiral, Royal Yacht Squadron, this afternoon viewed Cowes Week Racing in the Solent and attended a Luncheon on board Motorboat Warrior, off Cowes.

The Princess Royal, Admiral Royal Yacht Squadron, later attended the Cowes Week Regatta Meeting at the Castle.

Her Royal Highness, Master, the Corporation of Trinity House, this evening attended a Reception on board THV Patricia.

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'It felt like I was floating on a cloud'

Jodi Shurey, 30, and Dan Tostevin, 31, were married on October 27, 2024, on the outskirts of Edinburgh. They featured in The Times on Saturday April 12, 2025

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- Mon 14 Helsinki, Finland
- Tue 15 Tallinn, Estonia (depart early pm)
- Wed 16 Riga, Latvia
- Thu 17 Visby, Sweden (depart early pm)
- Fri 18 Berlin (from Warnemünde), Germany
- Sat 19 Aarhus, Denmark
- Tue 22 Arrive in Southampton
- Dates not mentioned are spent relaxing at sea



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Today Patchy cloud and rain in the north and west, dry elsewhere with sunny spells. Max 34C (93F), min 11C (52F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy, du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, ss=sun, t=thunder
 *previous day **data not available

	Temp C	Temp F	Rain mm	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	16	C	3.0	1.6
Aberporth	19	C	0.0	12.9
Anglesey	20	PC	0.0	13.3
Armagh	19	C	0.0	1.2
Barnstaple	24	PC	0.0	**
Bedford	25	PC	0.0	4.4
Belfast	18	C	0.0	8.0
Birmingham	23	S	0.0	**
Bournemouth	25	S	0.0	11.0
Bridlington	20	S	0.0	**
Bristol	24	S	0.0	14.3
Cambridge	21	PC	0.0	8.1
Cardiff	24	S	0.2	12.7
Edinburgh	19	C	0.0	4.4
Eckdalemuir	18	S	0.2	2.9
Glasgow	19	C	0.0	3.4
Hereford	23	S	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	27	S	0.0	7.4
Ipswich	25	PC	0.0	11.2
Isle of Man	18	PC	0.0	11.7
Isle of Wight	27	S	0.0	**
Jersey	23	S	0.0	9.9
Kewick	20	C	0.0	1.0
Kinloss	16	**	0.0	1.0
Leeds	20	PC	0.0	**
Lerwick	12	C	3.6	2.1
Leuchars	19	C	0.0	3.5
Lincoln	22	S	0.0	8.4
Liverpool	21	PC	0.0	**
London	27	PC	0.0	12.9
Lyneham	24	S	0.0	12.3
Manchester	23	C	0.0	8.9
Margate	24	S	0.0	4.8
Milford Haven	19	PC	0.0	**
Newcastle	21	S	0.0	**
Nottingham	23	S	0.0	9.8
Orkney	14	C	0.2	**
Oxford	25	PC	0.0	**
Plymouth	22	S	0.0	**
Portland	22	PC	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	20	PC	0.0	**
Shoreham	30	PC	0.0	11.3
Shrewsbury	22	PC	0.0	7.9
Snowdonia	19	S	0.0	**
Southend	24	S	0.0	11.9
South Uist	15	C	0.0	**
Stornoway	14	C	1.2	5.0
Tiree	15	C	0.0	7.9
Whitehaven	19	C	0.0	4.4
Wick	**	PC	0.2	**
Yewitton	25	S	0.0	10.9

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

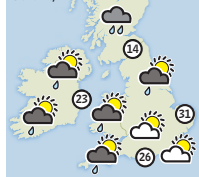
Alicante	34	S	Madeira	26	PC
Amsterdam	26	S	Madrid	32	S
Athens	29	PC	Malaga	30	S
Auckland	**	**	Malta	34	S
Bahrain	42	S	Malta	33	PC
Bangkok	32	PC	Melbourne	14	PC
Barbados	30	PC	Mexico City	25	PC
Barcelona	31	PC	Miami	33	B
Beijing	**	**	Milan	28	PC
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	28	B
Belgrade	34	S	Montreal	26	S
Berlin	24	PC	Moscow	27	S
Bermuda	30	PC	Mumbai	28	M
Bordeaux	34	S	Munich	28	B
Brussels	28	S	Nairobi	21	B
Bucharest	30	S	Naples	32	PC
Budapest	36	S	New Orleans	34	PC
Buenos Aires	**	**	New York	29	B
Cairo	37	S	Nice	30	PC
Calcutta	33	**	Nicosia	35	PC
Canberra	14	PC	Oslo	19	S
Cape Town	23	S	Paris	30	S
Chicago	22	C	Perth	16	PC
Copenhagen	22	PC	Prague	22	B
Corfu	34	S	Reykjavik	16	S
Delhi	34	PC	Riga	21	PC
Dubai	46	S	Rio de Janeiro	26	S
Dublin	18	PC	Riyadh	44	S
Fair	26	S	Rome	33	S
Florence	35	S	San Francisco	23	PC
Frankfurt	29	S	Santiago	8	B
Geneva	31	S	Sao Paulo	23	S
Gibraltar	31	S	Seoul	32	PC
Helsinki	22	S	Seychelles	29	PC
Hong Kong	27	PC	Singapore	32	PC
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	18	B
Istanbul	30	PC	Stockholm	18	S
Jerusalem	35	S	Sydney	18	PC
Johannesburg	16	S	Tel Aviv	35	S
Kuala Lumpur	34	PC	Tenerife	30	S
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	33	PC
Lanzarote	35	S	Vancouver	22	PC
Las Palmas	31	S	Venice	**	**
Lima	21	C	Vienna	26	S
Lisbon	28	S	Warsaw	22	PC
Los Angeles	26	PC	Washington	30	PC
Luxor	42	S	Zurich	**	**

Five days ahead

Largely dry and sunny in southern Britain, bright periods and scattered showers elsewhere

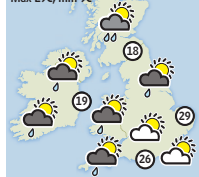
Tomorrow

Dry with sunny periods in the southeast. Bright spells and scattered showers elsewhere, heaviest in the north.
 Max 31C, min 10C



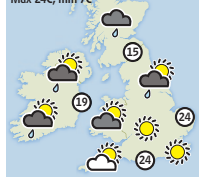
Wednesday

Bright intervals and showery outbreaks of rain in northern and western areas. Staying dry in the southeast.
 Max 29C, min 9C



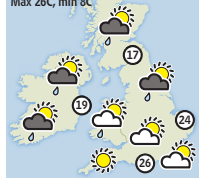
Thursday

A dry day with long sunny spells across southern Britain. Patchy cloud and showery outbreaks of rain elsewhere.
 Max 24C, min 7C



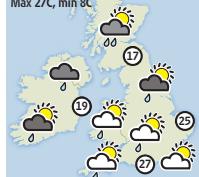
Friday

Bright periods and scattered showers in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and northern England. Dry and sunny in the south.
 Max 26C, min 8C



Saturday

Dry with sunny periods through the morning. Bright spells and scattered showers for most by the afternoon, heaviest in Scotland.
 Max 27C, min 8C



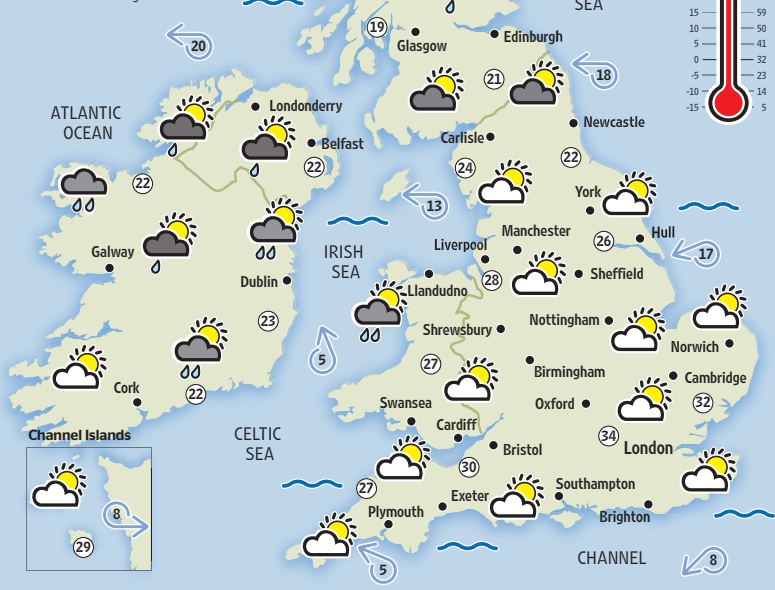
The Times weather page is provided by **WeatherQuest**

Wind speed
 34 (mph)
Temperature
 28 (degrees C)

Sea state
 Calm
 Slight
 Moderate
 Rough

Flood alerts and warnings

At 17:00 on Sunday there were no flood alerts or warnings in England, Wales or Scotland. For further information and updates in England visit check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk



General situation: A dry and hot day with sunny spells in the south and east, cloudy with rain elsewhere.
Republic of Ireland, N Ireland: Sunny periods and one or two spots of rain in the morning. Bright intervals and showery rain by the afternoon, heavy in places. Light to moderate east to southeasterly winds. Maximum 23C (73F), minimum 13C (55F).
Edinburgh and Dundee, Can Highland, NW Scotland, NE Scotland, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, Glasgow, Argyll, N Isles:

A day of patchy cloud and outbreaks of rain, most widespread through the morning. Light to moderate east to southeasterly winds. Maximum 19C (66F), minimum 11C (52F).
SW Scotland, Borders, Lake District, NE Eng, Cen N Eng, E Eng: Mainly dry with bright periods and a chance of the odd spot of light rain or drizzle through early morning. Light to moderate east to southeasterly winds, perhaps fresh along the coast later. Maximum 26C (79F), minimum 12C (54F).

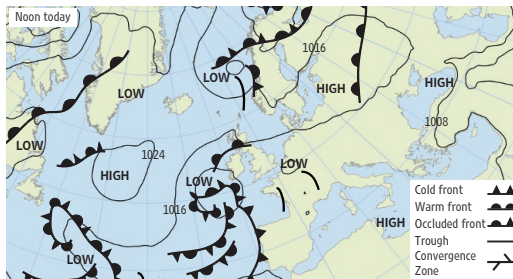
NW Eng, W Mids, Wales, IoM, SW Eng, Channel Is: A mostly dry day with sunny spells and the odd isolated shower in western Wales by late afternoon. Light to moderate east to southeasterly winds. Maximum 30C (86F), minimum 13C (55F).
London, E Anglia, E Mids, Cen S Eng, SE Eng: Dry and hot with lengthy spells of sunshine, perhaps turning a little hazy later. Light to moderate east to southeasterly winds. Maximum 34C (93F), minimum 13C (55F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.

Heights in metres. All times in local time

	Today	Ht	Ht
Aberdeen	04:47	4.2	17.26
Aberporth	10:58	12.1	23.13
Belfast	02:22	3.5	14.52
Cardiff	10:40	11.4	22.56
Devonport	09:33	5.0	21.40
Dover	02:22	6.3	14.42
Dublin	02:53	4.0	15.26
Falmouth	08:51	4.7	21.01
Greenock	03:52	3.5	16.17
Harwich	03:23	3.8	15.23
Holyhead	01:46	5.5	14.09
Hull	09:54	7.3	22.26
Leith	06:08	5.4	18.43
Liverpool	02:31	9.2	14.52
London Bridge	05:31	6.8	17.43
Lowestoft	01:09	2.3	13.08
Milford Haven	09:53	6.5	22.13
Morecambe	02:42	9.2	15.03
Newhaven	02:32	6.4	14.55
Newquay	08:46	6.4	21.06
Oban	09:12	3.5	21.04
Penzance	08:18	5.1	20.38
Portsmouth	02:48	4.4	15.27
Shoreham	02:33	5.9	14.56
Southampton	02:03	4.4	14.51
Swansea	09:58	8.8	22.14
Tees	07:09	5.4	19.50
Weymouth	10:25	1.8	22.37



Synoptic situation

A warm front associated with a low-pressure system to the west of Ireland will bring patchy cloud and spells of rain across northern Britain, most widespread in the morning. An occluded front will move into Ireland through the afternoon, bringing bright periods and showery outbreaks of rain. Largely dry elsewhere with hazy sunshine.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday
 Warmest: Charlwood, 30.2C
 Coldest: Katesbridge, 3.2C
 Wettest: Glascombe, 5.4mm
 Sunniest: Almondsbury, Gloucestershire, 14.3hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
 Sun rises: 05:27
 Sun sets: 20:45
 Moon rises: 22:11
 Moon sets: 12:23 Tue
 Third quarter: August 6

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:48-04:42
Belfast	21:51-05:10
Birmingham	21:26-05:02
Cardiff	21:27-05:11
Exeter	21:26-05:15
Glasgow	21:50-04:57
Liverpool	21:34-05:03
London	21:15-04:59
Manchester	21:31-05:00
Newcastle	21:35-04:51
Norwich	21:14-04:49
Penzance	21:32-05:25
Sheffield	21:28-04:57

Weather Eye
 Paul Simons



If you were looking for a cool and even damp holiday in Britain last month the place to go was Baltasound in Shetland where the mean temperature was 12.6C, just below its average. There was also no shortage of rainfall, which hit the average of 63mm.

But it was a very different story elsewhere in Britain, according to early results from the Met Office. It was the driest July on record in England and in Wales, with the most severe drought in southern England where a miserable 2 per cent of its usual rain fell over the month. It was also the warmest July for mean temperature in both England and Wales, and was especially warm in southern England. July was also thoroughly sunny across the UK, especially in west Wales and western parts of England.

We know the July rainfall and temperature records were exceptional because they can be compared with historical observations for the UK dating back to 1838. Such a long record of rainfall in particular exists thanks to an extraordinary feat when 16,000 volunteers converted more than five million handwritten rainfall records into digital format in only 16 days during the first Covid-19 lockdown.

As for August, this month has begun in a similar way to July's weather, with the UK divided in half: cooler and wetter in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but continuing largely dry and warm in England and Wales. Monday is growing hot and sultry in the south once again as a low pressure system drags up heat and humidity from France. There are hopes of showers for some of the driest parts of England and Wales on Tuesday but these could be sporadic and largely towards the west. So, for the driest parts of England, the prospects for rain are still looking forlorn, especially in the southeast. There is no prospect of a heatwave at present, although later on in the week and next weekend high pressure builds again and brings yet more dry conditions.

Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

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Sport

A classic All Blacks flanker... but he was born in Germany

Stuart Barnes



The allure of the All Blacks jersey stretches around the world. We are used to players of Pacific Island heritage wearing the silver fern but Europeans are a novelty. Martin Johnson famously represented New Zealand Colts but he was always bound for a return flight to England and his World Cup-winning destiny. New Zealand now have a couple of rather more unusual continental Europeans in their ranks. It seems the Kiwis still have pulling power. The more experienced of them, the more renowned, is another second-row from the northern hemisphere — the appropriately named Fabian Holland. He has endured a spell of injury after an outstanding season in black. The 23-year-old Holland did, indeed, find his way to the land of the

long white cloud from the Netherlands. He travelled to New Zealand in 2019. The boy from Alkmaar is now a Highlander and one of the most highly rated young forwards in the game.

Holland was crowned last season's World Rugby breakthrough player of the year and has made 12 appearances for the All Blacks. Two of his fellow nominees were Joseph-Aukuso Suaalii and a certain Henry Pollock. It would be no surprise to see the soaring Dutchman regain his starting position in the heart of the New Zealand pack upon his return from injury.

It would be more of a surprise to see New Zealand's other "European" embraced in the starting line-up against the Springboks, with a four-match series kicking off on August 22. However, the Auckland and Blues back-row sensation, Anton Segner, is one of rugby's most talked-about newcomers. The 25-year-old runs hard and fast, tackles with a finality and is ubiquitous at the breakdown. He is the classic hard-graft Kiwi, chiselled in the Richie McCaw mould. Except he is from Frankfurt. There's

no Manawatu mother. No father from Fox Glacier, not a hint of even a Kiwi-accented grandparent. The only thing from New Zealand that runs in his blood is rugby.

Here is a kid's dream come true. Leaving Germany aged 16 for a scholarship to attend Nelson College on the north coast of the South Island, Segner slotted straight into the language of the land. Outstanding throughout the age grades, he made his seamless (and much shorter) journey from the South Island to the North and the city of Auckland. From Auckland to the Blues and then to the All Blacks, Segner's fairytale continues.

He made his first All Blacks appearance from the bench against Italy in the second round of Nations Championship matches last month. That impressive 40-minute display was backed up with an accomplished 22 minutes against Ireland. It is a ferocious scrap for positions in the New Zealand back row but their German-born flanker has forced his way into contention.

Standing at 6ft 4in tall with terrific timing, he is a tremendous lineout asset, but Dave Rennie, the All Blacks head coach, appears to be considering Tupou Vaai as a second/back-row hybrid. There is a vast legion of back-row forwards fighting for a berth in the Test 23 — even without Vaai and his versatility. It is fair to say that Segner would have won himself a wardrobe of appearances had he stayed in Germany. Yet the evidence from his two cameos for New Zealand suggests he has a fantastic future.

The marketing men can dream. Imagine Pollock and the even more coltish-looking Segner squaring up when New Zealand come to Twickenham in November. It is the stuff of internet heaven. England against Germany on a rugby field.

Segner made his All Blacks debut last month



But before then, Segner and his teammates have one hell of a tour lined up in South Africa. Rennie has taken the opportunity to rest his captain, Ardie Savea, for the early stages of the tour. He is due to arrive 11 days before the first Test, leaving an extra vacancy in the back row for the warm-up game against Stormers in Cape Town this Friday. Segner, the sensation of the moment, could encounter one of the stars of the Nations Championship in South Africa's Paul de Villiers. Arguably, nobody performed better in last month's series of matches, yet the open-side flanker has been left out of the Springboks squad for their one-off Test in Argentina.

It is more complex than a case of Rassie Erasmus, the South Africa

head coach, dumping him now that his skipper, Siya Kolisi, is fit and raring to go. The idea of leaving behind a young player to cross paths with New Zealand is smart. De Villiers is box office but at 23, he's still learning.

He is also seen as a potential backup to Jasper Wiese, formerly of Leicester Tigers, at No 8. While De Villiers recently wore the No 6 jersey for the Springboks, Erasmus is known to be toying with the idea of him playing at the base of the scrum. With next year's World Cup on the horizon he is targeting a hybrid bench, with centres playing on the blind-side flank, blind-side flankers at hooker and — with De Villiers perhaps — open-side flankers playing as highly skilled ball-carrying No 8s.

It makes more sense to play De Villiers at home rather than in Argentina, Test match or not. Pieter-Steph du Toit and Jesse Kriel, stalwarts of the three Nations Championship Tests played last month, have also been left behind, while Kolisi, Eben Etzebeth, Lood de Jager and Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu return from varying degrees of injury and rest for the match.

The Springboks and their management are as full of tricks as they are their traditional power. Guided by Erasmus, they are clever and cunning on and off the pitch. New Zealand and their northern hemisphere forwards will learn as much about themselves as they will their old rival over the course of the next month or so. Win or lose, expect New Zealand and Segner to leave South Africa a tougher, wiser group of men.

Ripon

Rob Wright

2.24 The Mean Fiddler (nb) 3.54 Rousing Encore
2.54 Queen Sana 4.24 Polygram
3.24 Angel Numbers 4.54 Vega's Virtue
Going: good, good to firm in places
Draw: 5f-6f, high numbers best
Sky Sports Racing

2.24 Novice Stakes (£5,757: 6f) (4)

1 (3) 3 REFLECT ON GLORY 7 R R Burke 9-7 C Lee
2 (1) 04 SOLE RULER 43 P Midgley 9-7 P Mulrennan
3 (2) 2 THE MEAN FIDDLER 8 (T) J S Quinn 9-7 J Hart
4 (4) 23 WAR GAMING 19 (B) G Scott 9-7 C Fallon

Events The Mean Fiddler, 2-1 War Gaming, 4-1 Reflect On Glory, 16-1 Sole Ruler.
Rob Wright's choice: The Mean Fiddler was beaten just a nose at Pontefract; this trip will suit Danger War Gaming

2.54 Novice Stakes (£5,234: 6f) (6)

1 (2) 00606 AURORA'S DOUBLESIX 49 (H) B Rothwell 4-9-6 S Farmer (5)
2 (3) 00 ALL GOOD 293 J Canacho 3-9-2 T Kiley-Marshall (3)
3 (1) 22262 QUEEN SANA 20 Ollie Sangster 3-9-2 D Tudhope
4 (4) 00-00 ROHINI 27 (P) Joey Ramsden 3-9-2 Taryn Langley (5)
5 (5) 03 ROYALE UNISON 5 K R Burke 3-9-2 C Lee
6 (4) 26 SECRET HARVEST 5 (T) Allen 3-9-2 C Fallon

Events Queen Sana, 7-2 Secret Harvest, 4-1 Royale Union, 10-1 All Good, 14-1 Aurora's Doublesix, 20-1 Rohini.
Wright choice: Queen Sana was a fair second at Ffos Las; can open her account in a weak race Danger Secret Harvest

3.24 Handicap (£4,711: 5f) (5)

1 (4) 20941 ANGEL NUMBERS 18 (D) R Carr 3-9-9 JP Sullivan
2 (5) 62100 CREATIVE QUEEN 25 (P) W Haggas 3-9-7 C Fallon
3 (1) 51654 MARAJITO 16 (D) T Easterly 4-9-6 O McSweeney
4 (2) 01141 ZOUSTAR DREAMS 16 (P) D Dunlop 3-9-6 J Callan
5 (3) 31-50 NORTH WEST GAL 67 (D) J S Quinn 3-9-4 J Hart

15-4 Zoustar Dreams, 5-2 Angel Numbers, 9-2 Marajito, 11-2 Creative Queen, 6-1 North West Gal.
Wright choice: Angel Numbers can defy a 4lb rise for her recent success at Thirsk Danger Zoustar Dreams

3.54 Handicap (£9,277: 6f) (7)

1 (6) 00013 DARK CLOUD RISING 27 (V/B,F,D) D O'Meara 4-10-4 D Tudhope
2 (2) 22000 COMMANCHE FALLS 5 (P,C,D) M Dods 9-9-11 C Beasley
3 (2) 01452 LORD ROXBLY 14 (D) N Tinkler 4-9-5 A Jary (3)
4 (4) 0-205 SAINT LAWRENCE 17 (B,D) K Ryan 8-9-3 S Gray
5 (3) 04030 ROUSING ENCORE 9 (D) R Carr 6-9-3 JP Sullivan
6 (7) 00004 BOSTON DAN 9 T Easterly 3-9-2 S B Kirrane
7 (5) 03000 GRANT WOOD 10 (D) R Carr 7-8-11 J Hart

11-10 Dark Cloud Rising, 2-1 Lord Roxbly, 9-1 Saint Lawrence, 14-1 Boston Dan, Rousing Encore, 20-1 Commanche Falls, 50-1 Grant Wood.
Wright choice: Rousing Encore was unsuited by a change of tactics at York; can bounce back Danger Lord Roxbly

4.24 Handicap (£6,281: 1m 2f) (5)

1 (4) 64321 EVERYONEKNOWSADAVE 16 (D) Jessica Macey 4-9-8 R Kavanagh (3)
2 (1) 01020 MAO SHANG WONG 29 (D) D O'Meara 4-9-6 C Whiteley (5)
3 (2) 2262 HIS FINEST HOUR 284 (W,D) Miss T Jackson 5-9-5 C Lee
4 (5) 63421 POLYGRAM 8 T Davidson 4-9-5 (Sex) J Hart
5 (3) 66311 POET'S DAWN 4 (P,C,D) T Easterly 11-9-4 (Sex) S B Kirrane

6-4 Everyone Knows Dave, 11-4 Polygram, 5-1 Poet's Dawn, 13-2 Mao Shang Wong, His Finest Hour.
Wright choice: Polygram scored in good style at Pontefract; a 5lb rise is fair Danger Mao Shang Wong

4.54 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,664: 1m) (8)

1 (6) 6-945 DACRES CROSS 26 (B,F) K Ryan 9-9-5 S Gray
2 (2) 51301 QUEEN SANA'S VIRTUE 16 (P,C,D) T Easterly 9-8 D Fentiman
3 (3) 44660 SALLOWS RETURN 25 (D) O'Meara 9-7 D Tudhope
4 (3) 30094 SCHEFFLER 18 (P) Adrian Nicholls 9-6 J Garrity
5 (7) 3-40 TACO MAGO 27 (T) S England 9-5 O Orr
6 (8) 4621 AMBER HAMUR 23 (D) E Bethell 9-4 C Beasley
7 (1) 2525 HEY HAVANA 28 G Harner 9-2 C Lee
8 (4) 0-466 ITSZABOY 31 N Tinkler 8-10 A Jary (3)

6-4 Amber Hamur, 11-4 Vega's Virtue, 4-1 Dacres Cross, 6-1 Hey Havana, 20-1 Scheffler, 25-1 Sailor's Return, Itszaboy, 33-1 Taco Mago.
Wright choice: Vega's Virtue was a three-length winner here; can follow up Danger Hey Havana, Amber Hamur

Nottingham

Rob Wright

2.40 Aura Champagne (nap) 4.10 Invincible Crown
1.40 Lady Leora 4.40 Del Corso
3.40 Star People 5.10 Venetian Lion

Going: good to firm, good in places
Draw: 5f-6f, high numbers best
Racing TV

2.40 Maiden Stakes (£5,400: 1m) (6)

1 (6) 3-3 AURA CHAMPAGNE 16 R Hannan 3-9-2 S M Levy
2 (3) 4252 QUISSANA 18 (D) L Houghton 3-9-2 C Bishop
3 (1) 02 YIMMA 18 W Haggas 3-9-2 T Marquand
4 (4) 0-44 AMBER HAMUR 23 (D) E Bethell 9-4 C Beasley
5 (7) 4252 QUISSANA 18 (D) L Houghton 3-9-2 C Bishop
6 (1) 02 YIMMA 18 W Haggas 3-9-2 T Marquand

9-4 Yimma, 11-4 Amber Hamur, 3-1 Quissana, 100-30 Moonlit Surf, 16-1 Moonite, 50-1 My Perogative.

3.10 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,400: 6f) (7)

1 (3) 400 BLUE SIGN 25 (T) I Mohammed & J Santos 9-2 S De Sousa
2 (5) CASABLANCA DREAM M Botti 9-2 S Narreddu
3 (2) 05 HARLEQUIN GIFT 25 K Ryan 9-2 T Eaves
4 (7) LADY LEORA K Ryan 9-2 K Stott
5 (6) 3 LOLA DE VALENCE 13 B Millman 9-2 L Edmunds
6 (1) MANDOLIN RAIN D Cunha 9-2 S Donohoe
7 (4) PIPER CEE K R Ryan 9-2 S James

2-1 Lady Leora, 11-4 Piper Cee, 5-1 Lola De Valence, 8-1 Harlequin Gift, Blue Sign, 12-1 Mandolin Rain, Casablanca Dream.

3.40 Handicap (2-Y-O: £4,187: 6f) (7)

1 (4) 106 BOLETO 21 (D) C Cox 9-9 R Ryan
2 (5) 43134 FERN CLYDE 17 (H,T,D) Easterly 9-7 J Dickson (5)
3 (3) 2320 LEUCOTHEA 16 R Hannan 9-6 S M Levy
4 (6) 052 STAR PEOPLE 14 J & S Quinn 9-6 M Ghiani
5 (7) 660 MOBARID 8 T Walker 9-3 K Shoemaker
6 (2) 51 DISSETER 10 M Tregoning 9-3 Ashley Lewis (5)
7 (3) 0484 HARVEY'S POP 11 D Cunha 9-2 S Donohoe

11-8 Disserter, 7-2 Star People, 4-1 Leucothea, 5-1 Fern Clyde, 7-1 Mobarid, Harry's Pop, 14-1 Boleto.

4.10 Handicap (£3,402: 5f) (6)

1 (3) 00550 HURT YOU NEVER 14 (B,D) Adrian Nicholls 7-9-9 J Nicholls (3)
2 (2) 04214 INVINCIBLE CROWN 19 (D) R Carr 4-9-8 T Eaves
3 (4) 40606 LITTLE JAYBEE 49 (D) P Evans 3-9-6 K Shoemaker
4 (1) 4066 SERGEANT MAVER 16 (D) N Tinkler 5-9-5 S McManoman
5 (5) 1500 STAR MARIAN 59 (B,D) D Loughane 3-9-3 R Ryan
6 (6) 64000 UP THE MONK 33 (B) M Appleby 4-8-10 M Paetel (5)

11-8 Invincible Crown, 4-1 Hurt You Never, 5-1 Sergeant, Maver, 6-1 Little Jaybee, 8-1 Star Marian, 10-1 Up The Monk.

4.40 Handicap (£4,187: 1m 2f) (4)

1 (3) 40653 DAWN OF LIBERATION 68 (D) R Carr 7-10-3 W Fentiman (3)
2 (4) 623 SEDERAH 16 E Bethell 3-9-7 C Rodriguez
3 (2) 33421 DEL CORSO 16 (D) E Walker 3-9-6 K Shoemaker
4 (1) 33-44 AUSSIE PEARL 39 (P) Johnston 3-9-1 S B Bowen

Events Del Corso, 5-2 Dawn Of Liberation, 9-2 Sederah, 7-1 Aussie Pearl.

5.10 Handicap (£4,123: 1m) (6)

1 (4) 40512 THEME PARK 4 (T,D) N Tinkler 3-9-7 S McManoman
2 (2) 22544 STRAIGHT A 11 M Appleby 5-10-1 M Paetel (5)
3 (5) 40663 SYMPHONY OF JOYS 13 K Frost 4-9-13 O Stammers
4 (2) 440-0 GEMMETHEGREENLITE 100 S Spencer 3-9-7 D Swift
5 (1) 0002 VENETIAN LION 7 (T) W Haggas 3-9-5 T Marquand
6 (6) 13-30 PRETTY SPIRITED 76 (D) L Mullner 4-9-4 T Eaves

7-4 Venetian Lion, 3-1 Theme Park, 7-2 Straight A, 9-2 Symphony Of Joys, 14-1 Pretty Spirited, 25-1 G Emmethegreenlite.

Windsor

Rob Wright

6.00 I'd Go Maniac 7.30 Saucy Jane
6.30 Rocasane 8.00 Tiger Beetle
7.00 Night Shining 8.30 Havana Club

Going: good to firm
Draw: 5f-6f, low numbers best
Sky Sports Racing

6.00 Handicap (£4,172: 1m 3f) (8)

1 (7) 05242 I'D GO MANIAC 18 (P) A King 7-11-2 Miss G King (5)
2 (2) 23643 MARKET HOUSE 38 (T,V) James Owen 6-10-13 Miss R Criticulden (5)
3 (4) 62441 GREEN TEAM 66 (V) N Luttonford 7-10-13 Miss G Luttonford (5)
4 (3) 3320 FAST STEPS 14 (P,B,F,C) B Millman 9-10-11 P Millman
5 (6) 22625 JODHPUR BLUE 3 (T) Williams 5-10-10 Miss A Milburn

6 (5) 4246 SHAHBAZ 18 (P,T) A Watson 6-10-10 Miss B Hampson
7 (1) 50345 WRIST ART 30 (T) James Owen 9-9-11 Miss E Lee (7)
8 (4) 54654 BLOODHOOD 49 (B,T) S Lyett 6-9-11 Miss M Jordan
3-1 I'd Go Maniac, 7-2 Green Team, 9-2 Market House, 11-2 Fast Steps, 6-1 Shahbaz, 8-1 Jodhpur Blue, 10-1 Wrist Art, 20-1 Bloodhood.

6.30 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £4,320: 6f) (7)

1 (1) LOVELY DARK ANGEL G Boughie 9-2 B Loughane
2 (2) PROPER NAUGHTY N Hannan 9-2 O Murphy
3 (5) 6 DECEN CAROLINAE 38 Jack Jones 8-13 J Leavy
4 (4) 0 PURPLE DREAM 11 T Ward 8-13 F Marsh
5 (3) POLLY THE SNIPER T Dascombe 8-10 W Cox
6 (7) 532 ROCASANE 38 G Margaron 8-10 D Egan
7 (6) 0 STAR BAYSIDE BOY 49 M Tregoning 8-10 R Hornby

2-1 Lovely Dark Angel, 5-2 Proper Naughty, 3-1 Rocasane, 11-2 Decen Caroline, 16-1 Star Bayside Boy, 20-1 Polly The Sniper, 50-1 Purple Dream.

7.00 Maiden Stakes (£5,234: 5f) (8)

1 (3) 00 FLAGRAIRIE 14 Daisy Hitchens 3-9-7 W Carson
2 (2) 002 YAZOO 12 (B) R Spencer 3-9-7 G Wood
3 (5) 4 ARDNAMURCHAN 70 H Candy 3-9-2 N Currie
4 (7) 5304 GRIS DE CHINE 20 (T) Zoe Hawkins 3-9-2 R Hornby
5 (4) 5-0 JUST DREAMING 20 E Houghton 3-9-2 C Hutchinson
6 (8) 6 LIVVYS EDGE 20 C Mason 3-9-2 G Mangon
7 (1) 4-644 NIGHT SHINING 32 (T) G Boughie 3-9-2 B Loughane
8 (6) 42-20 PILGRIM'S PROGRESS 9 R Hannan 3-9-2 P Dobbs

2-1 Night Shining, 11-4 Pilgrim's Progress, 4-1 Ardnamurchan, 8-1 Gris De Chine, 10-1 Livvys Edge, Yazio, 14-1 Just Dreaming, 66-1 Flagrair.

7.30 Handicap (£4,397: 6f) (5)

1 (4) 55600 INDEPENDENT EXPERT 10 J S Best 7-10-0 F Marsh
2 (2) 42636 SAUCY JANE 19 (P,D) Jack Morland 3-9-7 G Wood
3 (5) 40-20 Q T PIE 30 (P,D) T Dascombe 3-9-3 W Carson

Yesterday's racing results

Chester

Going: Good

2.10 (1m 4f 63yd) 1, Charmaine (Daniel Muscutt, 7-2); 2, Level Look (7-4 fav); 3, L'Eagle Aid (11-1), 7 ran. 1½, 1½, J R Fanshawe.
2.45 (6f 17yd) 1, Pure Grit (Oisín Murphy, 4-9 fav); 2, Shakwaa (11-8); 3, Sovereigns High (28-1), 7 ran. 2½, 2½, A M Balding.
3.52 (7f 17yd) 1, Simplify (Oisín Murphy, 6-1), 2, Calico Blue (6-5 fav); 3, Lifeplan (9-1), 9 ran. hd, 1, A M Balding.
4.22 (7f 17yd) 1, Dance In The Storm (Oisín Murphy, 1-1 fav); 2, The Angel King (22-1), 3, Palmbar Bay (28-1), 10 ran. 1, 1½, A M Balding.

4.22 (7f 17yd) 1, Blue Prince (Oisín Murphy, 13-8 fav); 2, Alpha Capture (9-4); 3, Midnight Strike (15-2), 6 ran. nk, 2½, P D Evans.
4.52 (1m 2f 70yd) 1, Tiger (Edward Greatrex, 2-1), 2, Cape Fear (9-4); 3, Farasi Lane (28-1), 9 ran. NR: Naples, 5½, nk, Ian Williams.
5.45 (6f 17yd) 1, Pure Grit (Oisín Murphy, 4-9 fav); 2, Shakwaa (11-8); 3, Sovereigns High (28-1), 7 ran. 2½, 2½, A M Balding.
6.30 (7f 17yd) 1, Simplify (Oisín Murphy, 6-1), 2, Calico Blue (6-5 fav); 3, Lifeplan (9-1), 9 ran. hd, 1, A M Balding.
7.30 (7f 17yd) 1, Dance In The Storm (Oisín Murphy, 1-1 fav); 2, The Angel King (22-1), 3, Palmbar Bay (28-1), 10 ran. 1, 1½, A M Balding.
8.22 (7f 17yd) 1, Blue Prince (Oisín Murphy, 13-8 fav); 2, Alpha Capture (9-4); 3, Midnight Strike (15-2), 6 ran. nk, 2½, P D Evans.
8.52 (1m 2f 70yd) 1, Tiger (Edward Greatrex, 2-1), 2, Cape Fear (9-4); 3, Farasi Lane (28-1), 9 ran. NR: Naples, 5½, nk, Ian Williams.
9.58 (5f 42yd) 1, Guest House (S De Sousa, 1-1 fav); 2, Melting Snow (11-4); 3, Bellini Spirit (33-1), 6 ran. 37½, hd, G G Margaron.
4.38 (1m 2f 23yd) 1, Nuptown Girl (Ryan Kavanagh, 13-8); 2, Risen Again (12-1); 3, Big Alk Watersley (10-1), 5 ran. 3½, 17½, Ian Williams.
5.08 (5f 42yd) 1, Dragon God (Tom Marquand, 7-2); 2, Papa Don't Preach (11-0 fav); 3, Mart (6-1), 7 ran. hd, 1½, A W Carroll.

Sport Commonwealth Games

Games is worth saving – but only if we all buy in

Rick Broadbent



What's the point of the Commonwealth Games? That appears to be the view of several top English athletes, the BBC and plenty of sporting snobs taking time out from being outraged by Gianni Infantino to sniff at netball and bowls. Here's the counterpoint. It is not the Olympics or the World Cup but that is

a good thing, and the Commonwealth Games taps into a lustrously eclectic drama that widens the traditional sporting lens. If, and it is a big if, it can pay its way then there is absolutely no coherent reason to discard it.

In Glasgow, the stories have involved stars such as Josh Kerr, Emma Finu-

cane, Georgia Hunter Bell and Adam Ramsay-Peaty. Then there are stories that would have remained ignored or unknown without these Games.

Where else do you get Idi Amin's grandson complaining about ill-treatment at the boxing; an Indian para shot putter using her gold medal to highlight domestic abuse as she explained how she was stripped naked by her husband and thrown out of her house; or Archie Goodburn finishing, in his words, "joint last" in the 50m breaststroke and then talking about swimming with a terminal illness? "The dream was to win a medal," he said. "That dream didn't come true, but one of my other dreams is that we see a future where brain cancer isn't the biggest killer of patients under 40."

The Commonwealth Games has always been a stepping stone too. Eight years before being the "Face of the Olympics" in 2012, Jessica Ennis-Hill was winning Commonwealth Youth Games medals. Two years later she was third at the Commonwealth Games proper. It provided invaluable experience of multi-sport events. So, too, when Amalie Smith, aged 16, won a silver medal here in the 400m individual medley, it was a glimpse of the future. If you like capturing the first flush of success as much as fawning over cults of celebrity, this stuff works.

Of course, it must work financially too. Victoria reasoned it was not worth £3 billion and pulled the plug. There has been obvious concern about the cost to taxpayers and Glasgow has managed to do this cheaply because Victoria had to pay about £190 million in compensation to pull out. The budget of the slimmed-down event was £150 million. Commonwealth Sport, the governing body, put in £120 million and the rest came from commercial revenues.

In the future Katie Sadleir, the body's chief executive, suggested the cost would run to £300 million and some



form of government investment would be needed. It remains to be seen whether that is a "reimagining", the Games' new buzzword, or unimaginable. Still, as Sadleir pointed out, it is a long way off the \$5.2 billion (£3.86 billion) budget for Brisbane's 2032 Olympics. "What the government pays versus what commercial pays will be a case-by-case basis," she said.

Phil Batty, the chief executive of Glasgow 2026, said 434,000 tickets were sold and another 200,000 people watched for free in the city at fans' sites. Netball, a school staple but not on the Olympic roster, was the most-watched event, with 100,000 people attending.

The irony is that while Australia withdrew as hosts, their athletes have treated it as a big deal. For their track and field stars it has been the pinnacle of the summer, whereas a timeline of

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Results

Commonwealth Games

Glasgow medal events only

Bowls: Men: Pairs: Bronze medal match Malaysia bt Canada 1½-1½. **Gold** Northern Ireland bt England 1-1 (tie-break 1-0). **Women: Singles: Bronze** S Wilson (Norfolk Isl) bt E Saroji (Malasy) 2-0. **Gold** K Rednall (Eng) bt A Merrien (Guer) 2-0.

Judo: Men: +100kg: Bronze medal bouts K Andrews (NZ) bt G Miller (Sco) 1st-0; P Monta (Ton) bt J Messe A Bessong (Can) 12st-11st. **Gold** G Antoniou (Cyp) bt K Oziccek-Takagi (Aus) bt 10st-0st. **-100kg: Bronze** G Kroussaniotakis (Cyp) bt A Michael (Cyp) 1ppon 100st-0st; F Tahman Zan (Camer) bt O Barratt (Wales) 1ppon 100st-1st. **Gold** K Reyes (Can) bt M Gregory (Eng) 1ppon 100-0.

Women: +78kg: Bronze K Hanna (Bah) bt L Durrhone (Maur) 1ppon 100-0st; M Gnacadjia Avaro (Gab) bt G Wood (Trin) 1ppon 100-0. **Gold** S Andrews (NZ) bt R Soppit Milla (Camer) 1ppon 100-0. **-78kg: Bronze** C Godbout (Can) bt J Narang (India) 1st-0st; Z Michaelidou (Cyp) bt S Ludford (Eng) 1st-0. **Gold** E Reid (Eng) bt M Swan (Aus) 1ppon 100st-1.

Netball: Bronze medal match Australia 68 England 50. **Gold** New Zealand 56 Jamaica 48.

Track cycling: Men: 1,000m time trial 1. L Hoffman (Aus) 58.53sec (Games record); 2. J Truman (Eng) +0.99s; 3. T Ryan (Aus) +1.154. **40km points race** 1. M Bostock (om) 83pts; 2. O Bieddyn (Aus) 80; 3. G Jackson (NZ) 61. **Women: Elimination** 1. A Polites (Aus); 2. G Baker (Aus); 3. M Coles-Lyster (Can). **Keirin** 1. E Finucane (Wales); 2. E Andrews (NZ) +0.097; 3. K Clonan (Aus) +0.152.

Leading final medals

	G	S	B	Total
1, Australia	70	45	56	171
2, England	29	45	36	110
3, Canada	19	20	23	62
4, India	13	17	9	39
5, Scotland	13	9	17	39
6, New Zealand	10	14	12	36
7, Nigeria	10	7	7	24
8, Jamaica	10	4	5	19
9, Wales	9	10	12	31
10, Malaysia	8	3	5	16

Football

Carabao Cup

Preliminary round

Tranmere (1) 2 Rochdale (1) 2
Whitaker 4
Davies 60
(aet; 2-2 after 90min; Rochdale won 2-1 on pens)

William Hill Scottish

Premiership

Aberdeen (0) 2 Hearts (1) 1
Mayo 90
Nisbet 90+5 (pen)
Sent off: Findlay (Hearts) 90+3
Falkirk (0) 0 St Mirren (1) 2
Phillips 11, 87
Hibernian (0) 1 Motherwell (1) 2
Boyle 56 (pen)
Fadiger 40 (pen)
Said 85

St Johnstone (1) 4 Kilmarnock (1) 3
Fowler 16
Diabate 47
Schjonnig-
Larsen 69 (og)
Fotheringham 80

St Mirren	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	pts
St Johnstone	1	0	2	0	2	3		
Aberdeen	1	0	0	2	1	1		
Motherwell	1	0	0	2	1	3		
Dundee Utd	1	0	1	0	1	1		
Rangers	1	0	1	0	1	1		
Celtic	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Dundee	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Kilmarnock	1	0	0	1	3	4	-1	0
Hearts	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
Hibernian	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
Falkirk	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0

William Hill Championship

Ayr 2
Arbroath 0; Inverness CT 0
Dunfermline 0; Livingston 2
Queen's Park 0; Morton 0 Partick 1; Raith 1 Stenhousemuir 1.

Ayr
Livingston 1 1 0 0 2 0 2 3
Partick 1 1 0 0 1 0 1 3
Raith 1 0 1 0 1 0 1 1
Stenhousemuir 1 0 0 1 1 0 1 1
Dunfermline 1 0 0 0 0 0 1 1
Inverness CT 1 0 0 0 0 0 1 1
Morton 1 0 0 1 0 1 1 0
Arbroath 1 0 0 1 0 2 -2 0
Queen's Park 1 0 0 1 0 2 -2 0

League One Alloa 0 East Fife 0; Cove 0 Airdrieonians 0; East Kilbride 5 Queen of the South 1; Montrose 0 Hamilton 5; Peterhead 0 Ross County 1.

League Two Annan 2 The Spartans 4; Clyde 3 Stranraer 1; Edinburgh City 0 Elgin 5; Forfar 1 Kilmory 0; Stirling Albion 2 Dumfries 0.

Cricket

The Hundred: MI London v Manchester Super Giants

Kia Oval (Manchester Super Giants won toss): MI London (4pts) beat Manchester Super Giants by 45 runs
MI London (balls)
W Jacks c Markram b Ahmad 62 (31)
J Vince c Baker b Dawson 29 (20)
N Pooran b Tongue 54 (28)
*S Curran st Buttler
b Ahmad 23 (11)
S Rutherford c du Plooy
b Tongue 1 (4)
T Curran run out 1 (2)
R Khan not out 7 (4)
Extras (b 1, lb 2, w 3) 6
Total (6 wks, 100 balls) 183



English athletes pulled out late before next week's European Championships.

Although Victoria pulled out, the level of Australian interest has embarrassed England. As the last events were concluding yesterday, Australia had 169 medals to England's 110, with 70 golds to 29. In Birmingham in 2022 there were only two medals between the old foes and Australia had 67 golds to England's 57. Intriguingly, Sadleir suggested one thing the organisers were considering was whether the Games could become more attractive as a qualifying competition for various world championships.

As for TV, Channel 7's coverage in Australia reached 11.39 million people, with about four million watching in Canada. In the UK, the Games was squarred away on TNT Sports with reports of daily peaks of only 200,000 viewers. If the Commonwealth Games

is to survive then it needs UK athletes and broadcasters to buy in.

The loss of live BBC coverage has been a blow, although it is in the midst of widespread cost-cutting. It is believed TNT paid only £5 million for coverage that has attracted plenty of flak. Sharron Davies, the former swimmer and sometime BBC pundit, said: "I'm really disappointed it's not on the BBC and that they are not covering more swimming. It is an important sport, one that saves lives, and has massive participation. I see the BBC's job as showing an array of sports."

It has been fascinating to see how the indifference at home is at odds with the passion of teams from Lesotho, Malaysia, the Norfolk Islands et al. A week here makes you challenge your scepticism and cynicism. It's an event worth saving if the price is right.



Big names such as Finucane, main — who won a fourth gold yesterday to the delight of her watching mother, inset — were on show in a Games that also revealed stories like that of Goodburn, swimming with a terminal illness, above, and Sharmila Dhankar, below left, a domestic abuse survivor



Kuwaki wins first major as Brits fade

AIG Women's Open Cathy Harris

There will not be many more flamboyant champions than Shihou Kuwaki, who claimed her first major with a par at the second play-off hole against Germany's Esther Henseleit in the 50th edition of the Women's Open at Royal Lytham & St Annes.

With her eye-catching outfit, bright ball markings and impressive eyelashes, the 23-year-old took home the winner's cheque of \$1.5 million (about £1.1 million). She capitalised on a cruel break for Henseleit, the 2024 Olympic silver medallist, when her drive deflected off a marshal into a gorse bush on the second play-off hole, meaning she failed to make par.

Overnight leader Yealimi Noh, and much of the chasing pack, fell away in increasingly testing conditions. But Kuwaki held her nerve, setting the clubhouse lead at five under, leaving Henseleit to hole a 45-foot putt across the 18th green and force the play-off.

The anticipated charge of the British duo Lottie Woad and Charley Hull never came and Hull's wait for a maiden major title continues, although both claimed top-ten finishes, tied for sixth.

Hull admitted she was shattered both mentally and physically after a week in which she received significant backlash for using a fake scratchcard to trick her caddie into thinking he had won £100,000. She said: "I've had to deal with so much online abuse but I'm proud to have earned three top-tens in majors this year."

Haeran Ryu's hopes of becoming the first player since 2013 to win three majors in the same year were dashed after she stumbled on Saturday.

Eight European players — Woad and Hull, Maja Stark and Linn Grant (both Sweden), Celine Boutier (France), Carlota Ciganda (Spain), Henseleit (Germany) and Nanna Koerstz Madsen (Denmark) — secured automatic spots for the Solheim Cup in September. Anna Nordqvist announces her four captain's picks today.

Kerr eyes Spoty shortlist

CONTINUED FROM BACK

didn't get through that semi-final and I don't think I'll ever believe that I've made history here. I can't believe I found this sport and this sport found me."

The team sprint had been a huge goal after Finucane's bronze in Birmingham in 2022. "Singing on the podium with the team was just insane," she said.

If anything sums up the highs and lows of elite sport, a week in the life of cycling's new golden couple provided it. Finucane's boyfriend, Matt Richardson, was ruled out of competing for England in Glasgow after a bad crash in a World Series keirin in Japan on the eve of the Games. "He's just come out of hospital

and is doing OK," Finucane, 23, said. The champion from Camarthen won gold in the team sprint at the Olympics in 2024 as well as a brace of bronze medals. "In Paris I wish I had stood on the top step and sung the anthem louder," she said. "That's what I did here."

Meanwhile Josh Kerr hopes that a remarkable five months will finally earn him a place on the BBC Sports Personality of the Year shortlist.

The Scot retained his 3,000m world indoor title in March, broke the 27-year-old mile record a fortnight ago and then added the Commonwealth mile title on Saturday. "I don't want to get my hopes up too early, but I would love to [be on the shortlist]," he said.

O Pope, T Boulton, N Sowter and R Gleeson did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-71, 2-109, 3-153, 4-175, 5-176, 6-183.

Bowling Atkinson 20-8-50-0; Dawson 15-5-33-1; Baker 20-7-40-0; Tongue 20-11-13-2; Ahmad 20-4-40-2; Markram 5-1-4-0.

Manchester Super Giants (balls) T Seifert b Khan 17 (12)

*A Markram c S Curran b Sowter 50 (26)

TJ Buttler c Sowter b Khan 13 (4)

H Klaassen c S Curran b Khan 13 (10)

L du Plooy c Pooran b T Curran 22 (17)

T Moores c Jacks b Khan 0 (2)

L Dawson b Khan 2 (3)

G Atkinson c Jacks b Gleeson 9 (7)

N Ahmad c Jacks b T Curran 8 (3)

J Tongue not out 8 (7)

S Baker c Sowter b Boulton 2 (4)

Extras (w 5) 138

Total (95 balls) 158

Fall of wickets 1-59, 2-70, 3-74, 4-104, 5-104, 6-109, 7-112, 8-121, 9-131.

Bowling Boulton 20-6-32-1; Curran 20-3-38-2; Gleeson 10-1-24-1; Sowter 20-4-23-1; Khan 20-9-17-5; Jacks 5-1-4-0.

Women
Kia Oval (Manchester Super Giants won toss): Manchester Super Giants (4pts) beat MI London by six wickets

MI London (balls) A Davidson-Richards 0 (2)

b Ecclestone 0 (4)

H Matthews b Ecclestone 0 (4)

*H Armistead c Ballinger 15 (15)

b MacDonald-Gay 11 (14)

A Kerr c Ghosh b Ballinger 11 (14)

N Carey c Ecclestone 17 (24)

b MacDonald-Gay 17 (24)

*K Chatfield c Ecclestone b Bryce 16 (16)

C Henry c Lanning b Brown 16 (9)

A Monaghan c Lanning b Brown 7 (9)

T Morris run out 0 (2)

K Gordon c Lanning 0 (3)

b MacDonald-Gay 0 (2)

A Stonehouse not out 1 (1)

Extras (b 4, lb 1, w 2) 7

Total (99 balls) 92

Fall of wickets 1-0, 2-1, 3-20, 4-37, 5-60, 6-78, 7-87, 8-87, 9-87.

Bowling Ecclestone 20-15-7-2; Ballinger 20-11-17-1; Brown 20-11-18-2; MacDonald-Gay 19-10-19-3; Villiers 15-6-18-0; Bryce 5-2-8-1.

Manchester Super Giants (balls) *M Lanning lbw b Gordon 43 (31)

b Gordon 34 (27)

*R Ghosh c Carey b Kerr 4 (5)

P Schofield b Kerr 0 (1)

M Villiers not out 12 (8)

K Bryce not out 0 (0)

Extras (lb 1, w 1) 2

Total (4 wks, 72 balls) 95

M Brown, J Gardner, S Ecclestone, R MacDonald-Gay and G Ballinger did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-73, 2-77, 3-77, 4-89.

Bowling Norris 10-6-9-0; Carey 10-2-16-0; Henry 5-2-11-0; Matthews 10-4-16-0; Kerr 20-7-21-2; Stonehouse 5-1-7-0; Gordon 12-6-14-2.

Trent Rockets v Sunrisers Leeds: Men

Trent Bridge (Trent Rockets won toss): Trent Rockets (4pts) beat Sunrisers Leeds by five runs

Trent Rockets (balls) B Duckett b Ellis 64 (47)

F Allen b Carse 2 (3)

A Donald c Ellis b Carse 40 (19)

*TS Billings lbw b Ahmed 9 (8)

T David not out 24 (22)

M Santner not out 1 (1)

Extras (b 1, w 5) 6

Total (4 wks, 100 balls) 146

L Gregory, C Overton, C Harrison, M Henry and M Amir did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-5, 2-68, 3-85, 4-136.

Bowling Ahmed 20-5-23-1; Carse 20-9-20-2; Potts 20-5-35-0; Ellis 20-6-26-1; Patterson-White 15-2-30-0; Lawrence 5-1-11-0.

Sunrisers Leeds (balls) M Marsh c Billings b Amir 41 (35)

*R Rickleton c Amir b Overton 0 (3)

*Z Crawley b Santner 26 (16)

H Brook c Duckett b Amir 46 (33)

D Lawrence not out 14 (8)

T Alsop not out 10 (5)

Extras (b 1, w 3) 4

Total (4 wks, 100 balls) 141

L Patterson-White, B Carse, M Potts, N Ellis and A Ahmed did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-7, 2-46, 3-117, 4-122.

Bowling Amir 20-11-20-2; Overton 10-5-11-1; Henry 15-3-25-0; Harrison 20-4-26-0; Santner 15-2-27-1; Gregory 20-4-31-0.

Women
Trent Bridge (Sunrisers Leeds won toss): Trent Rockets (4pts) beat Sunrisers Leeds by five runs

Trent Rockets (balls) S Duckley b Sutherland 56 (33)

*B Mooney b McCarthy 2 (5)

N Sciver-Burnt b Jonassen 33 (25)

*A Gardner c Litchfield b Baker 12 (9)

S Luff b Jonassen 5 (9)

B Heath c Cross b Sutherland 18 (11)

G Adams st Winfield-Hill b Baker 1 (2)

G Elwiss not out 5 (7)

Extras (lb 1, w 5, nb 1) 7

Total (7 wks, 100 balls) 139

K Garth, C Phillips and S Bates did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-8, 2-84, 3-105, 4-114, 5-114, 6-118, 7-139.

Bowling McCarthy 15-8-17-1; Jonassen 20-8-20-2; Cross 5-2-6-0; Baker 20-6-28-1; Sutherland 20-8-26-2; Sharma 10-11-17-0; Gibson 10-3-24-0.

Sunrisers Leeds (balls) B Smith c Duckley b Gardner 10 (12)

J Jonassen lbw b Adams 19 (18)

P Litchfield c Gardner b Phillips 24 (22)

A Sutherland not out 59 (30)

*D Gibson c Gardner b Bates 1 (5)

LI Winfield-Hill run out 15 (12)

D Carter not out 1 (1)

Extras (b 2, w 3) 5

Total (5 wks, 100 balls) 134

D Sharma, K Cross, C McCarthy and H Baker did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-15, 2-50, 3-74, 4-76, 5-126.

Bowling Garth 20-9-26-0; Bates 20-7-26-1; Gardner 20-9-18-1; Phillips 10-4-10-1; Elwiss 15-3-35-0; Adams 15-6-17-1.

Men
Trent Rockets (balls) S 5 4 1 0 0 16 0.76

L 5 3 2 0 0 12 0.40

W 4 3 1 0 0 12 0.22

S 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.10

Manchester SG 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.02

Leeds Sunrisers 4 2 2 0 0 8 0.07

London Spirit 4 1 3 0 0 4 0.05

Bham Phoenix 4 1 3 0 0 4 0.12

Women
Southern Brave (balls) S 5 0 0 0 0 20 0.49

Trent Rockets 5 4 1 0 0 16 1.67

Manchester SG 5 3 1 0 1 14 1.04

London Spirit 4 2 1 0 0 6 0.83

Bham Phoenix 4 1 2 0 1 6 2.18

Welsh Fire 4 1 3 0 0 4 0.29

Leeds Sunrisers 4 1 3 0 0 4 0.28

MI London 5 0 4 1 0 2 1.54

Metro Bank Cup: Group A: Beckenham

Nottinghamshire 293-8 (B Martindale 101); Kent 294-5; Kent (4pts) won by five wickets.

Leicestershire Leicestershire 289-8; Somerset 125; Leicestershire (4pts) won by 164 runs.

Northampton Northamptonshire 347-6 (G Miller 115); Lancashire 280.

Northamptonshire (4pts) won by 67 runs.

Rugby Gloucestershire 271-9 (O Price 122); Warwickshire 277-4 (R Yates 132).

Warwickshire (4pts) won by six wickets.

Leics 6 4 2 0 0 16 0.68

Notts 5 3 2 0 0 12 0.17

Surrey 5 3 2 0 0 12 0.06

Lancashire 5 3 2 0 0 12 0.07

Kent 5 3 2 0 0 12 0.29

Somerset 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.18

Warks 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.19

Northants 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.19

Gloucs 5 1 4 0 0 4 0.15

Group B: Derby Derbyshire 325-7 (W Madsen 100); Sussex 137 (J Morley 523).

Derbyshire (4pts) won by 188 runs.

Chelmsford Essex 376-5 (T Westley 129, M Critchley 102n); Worcestershire 269.

Worcestershire (4pts) won by 107 runs.

Uttilla Bowl Hampshire 246; Durham 249-1 (Em Gay 104n); Durham (4pts) won by nine wickets.

Lord's Middlesex 246; Yorkshire 211. Middlesex (4pts) won by 35 runs.

Middlesex 5 4 1 0 0 16 1.85

Durham 4 4 0 0 0 16 0.80

Yorkshire 5 3 2 0 0 12 0.64

Worce 5 3 2 0 0 12 0.30

Derbyshire 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.62

Essex 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.20

Hampshire 5 2 3 0 0 8 0.68

Gloucestershire 5 1 4 0 0 4 1.13

Sussex 5 1 4 0 0 2 1.81

Golf

US PGA Tour Rocket Classic

Detroit: Leaders after three rounds (United States unless stated): 195 68, 64, 63, 196 M Brennan 65, 67, 64, 199 R Fowler 63, 68, 67, C Kirk 65, 67, 66, C Young 69, 61, 68, R Hoegaard (Den) 69, 68, 61.

AIG Women's Open

Lytham St Annes: Leading final scores

(Great Britain and Ireland unless stated):

279 S Kuwaki (Japan) 66, 70, 73, 70; E Henseleit (Ger) 73, 69, 67, 70 (Kuwaki won play-off at second extra hole).

280 Y Soh (US) 67, 70, 69, 74; 282 N Korda (US) 73, 68, 73, 68; J Thitikul (Thai) 64, 73, 72, 73; 283 Hsu Wei-Ling (Taiwan) 71, 74, 69, 69; S Tan (Sing) 69, 74, 71, 69; C Hull 69, 71, 72, 72; Woad 69, 71, 70, 73; R Takeda (Japan) 69, 73, 72, 69; Ryu Haeran (S Kor) 66, 69, 74, 74; 284 M Katsu (Japan) 72, 68, 71, 73; Y Saso (Japan) 72, 73, 71, 68; C Boutier (Fr) 67, 74, 74, 69; S Kousskova (Cz) 77, 69, 71, 67.

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Castleford 18

Warrington 48; Catalans Dragons 12

Wakefield 32; York 34 St Helens 32.

Leeds

Wakefield 21 17 0 4 744 304 34

Wigan 21 16 0 5 587 352 32

Sport Football

Martin Samuel



It used to be said that after the battle had been fought, the press would move in to bayonet the wounded. In the case of the stricken Gianni Infantino, that role would now appear to be played by our own, dear Football Association.

Never has an executive body found its voice and its ethical principle so swiftly, once deploying either comes with absolutely no risk of recrimination. It is close to impossible to be on the wrong side of this argument now.

Yet it was only 40 days ago that Debbie Hewitt, the FA chair, was pictured grinning inanely while presenting the same blasted Fifa president with a personalised England shirt.

It was around that time that the FA had endorsed his continued presidency by letter. Roughly 18 months before, Hewitt helped send the World Cup, unopposed, to Saudi Arabia — and the 2030 edition to three continents — on what amounted to the democratic equivalent of jazz hands. And now the man behind all of the many swindles — their guy, backed by them, in case you needed reminding after this frantic repositioning — is the devil incarnate?

So let's not get carried away. When we are truly at the "ding dong the witch is dead" stage of this narrative, no one will sing louder or more joyously than me, but to be joined at the chorus by the very people who propped him up for a decade, who bowed lower and licked harder than all of the many sycophants, who could actually have acted to stop his corruption of the game's worth, yet did the opposite. Well, let's just say it's something of a surprise.

Even when Infantino goes, this is no great victory. For it will only show what could have been done sooner, yet was not. The whole time, as many argued, and not least on these pages, the power was within. Football politics was like the board game Risk and the moment Fifa lost Europe, it lost the world, too.

We can argue the significance of the Asian Football Confederation's statement, or Concacaf's dissatisfaction, because their interventions meant that Infantino did not have the voting numbers to advance his plan. But we know the real numbers that count for Fifa, and they stopped adding up the moment it was agreed that Uefa would boycott the World Cup.

Successful Fifa regimes survive because everyone has been hoodwinked into believing a vote in Kenya, say, is worth the same as one in Germany. Yet a television contract is not. No bucks, no Buck Rogers was how the United States government explained the Mercury space programme to the original astronauts, and without the broadcast rights deals of the major European countries and the big American deals that are struck on the back of Europe's marquee talents, Fifa tournaments are as good as dead financially.

So what stopped them? What stopped us? Why has it only taken this latest abomination for there to be action? Had Europe boycotted when Fifa switched the Qatar World Cup to mid-winter, or when it became clear that so much of the bidding process had been corrupted, or when Infantino manipulated the hosting rota to award Gulf states two tournaments in four editions, that



Hewitt, the FA chair, presents an England shirt to Infantino — only 40 days before the governing body joined Uefa, led by Aleksander Ceferin, below, in rejecting the Fifa president's scheme to sell off stakes in the World Cup to private investors

FA has finally grown a spine, but it propped up Infantino for years

would have been it: over. But seemingly they wanted the money, too. They wanted it from beIN Sports, or from the PIF, they wanted to be in the Gulf game just as much. So they said nothing, did nothing. Paid lip service to protest. Wore a little armband then took it off, chastened. Only now that they can't be wrong have they found a voice.

It shouldn't have had to come to this. Exiting Qatar in 2022, I detailed the feeling of powerlessness. The FBI had got convictions and it made no difference. Corruption was proven but the tournament went ahead just the same. Newspapers and NGOs exposed migrant worker deaths, migrant worker living and site conditions, migrant worker pay and terms. There were changes but much too late.

"Qatar 2022 rolled over us and we had to lie back and take it," I wrote. "And, because we did, the temptation is to think that we must do so again. That

after this, wherever Infantino and his henchmen want to drag the World Cups of the future, however repressive, however alienating for the marginalised sections of society, we can only wring our hands and observe."

But I never believed it was as bleak as that. I always thought the major nations, the European nations in particular, possessed the ability to resist if they had the desire to do so. So the piece continued.

"But that isn't true. There is another way. Oh, it's high risk, high stakes stuff. It's a gamble. It will require nerves of steel. Yet it's simple. It just needs those who run football to say the one word that lodges in their throat, often when it matters most. It requires them to reject a basic tendency towards greed and complicity, but here's what they do. They say no. No to coming to a country that does not genuinely welcome everybody. No to the rejection of basic human rights. So, no to Saudi Arabia in 2030. Not if the gay community are



made to feel unwelcome and uncomfortable. Not if a woman in sight of the VIPs causes offence."

And that's what happened at last, three years, seven months and 11 days later. One word: no. Sure, it took pages of statements and justifications and legal clarification, and it needed a scheme so transparently wrong that a chimpanzee could see through it, but that's all it amounted to: no. And it's all that ever needed to be said, too. For Infantino's castle to collapse. For his supposed allies to turn, for his motivations to be exposed. Just say no.

Yet before we got to no, good grief there was an awful lot of yes. Yes to a World Cup across six countries, yes to a World Cup likely to have the same horrid flaws as the one in Qatar, yes to not having secret ballots, yes to supportive letters to a president who increasingly appears to regard Fifa's disciplinary regime as fluid, open to suggestions or dependent on status. Yes to quarters, yes to half-time shows, yes to the Fifa peace prize, yes to the most expensive tickets in history, to egregious flattery, to creeping and crawling, to bowing and scraping, yes, yes, a thousand times yes.

Meaning, in the words of *Pulp Fiction's* Winston Wolf, "Let's not start sucking each other's d***s quite yet." The job's not done. The next part is tougher. It's not a boycott if the football world returns to normal and Infantino is still there. His exit should be a condition of re-entry. No one's in until he's out.

Does Europe, does our FA, have the stomach for that? Could be an isolationist stance. Could end up out on a limb like Norway, who the bigger nations tend to leave hanging when a stand such as the Fifa peace prize complaint is made.

What if the nations that signed up for those useless rainbow armbands in 2022 had instead got together from the very start when Fifa awarded the World Cup to Qatar in 2010, and refused to participate? England, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands — could they have persuaded others to make a stand 16 years ago?

Now that's protest. Real protest. Just as it would be if the FA, and other powerbrokers, announced they would simply not return to international competition while Infantino stayed in charge.

Instead, the FA have come over all masterful in a gang of 55. Even their condemnation basically said they supported Uefa's condemnation with a few extra lines calling for "a robust review". Oh God, not the robust review. What next, the soft cushions, the comfy chair? Our FA is the equivalent of the kid hiding behind the school bully and his mates shouting, "Yeah?" When the bully's gone, he's actually all right. Different lad. A lot quieter. No attitude at all.

And this is not an argument for Uefa to flex its muscles over every little half-time show. That's equally an abuse of power and the rest of the world would rightly get sick of it. Yet a World Cup hosting process we knew was corrupt, human-rights violations, hokey democratic processes, these were never minor issues. Even, as an advocate of the Club World Cup, the self-serving insertion of Inter Miami and therefore Lionel Messi into the revamped 2025 tournament.

The increasing encroachment of Fifa on to the playing field is one of the most worrying aspects of the Infantino era. So regime change is not just preferred, it is essential. And lots of work remains to be done.

The next question should be whether the same people that let it all slide for so long are really the ones to do it.

Alonso has the power but insists Chelsea reset isn't all about him

New manager says he's on same page as the sporting directors with his plan to revive club, writes Peter Rutzler

Xabi Alonso has struggled with jet lag in Sydney, getting up in the middle of the night with a confused body clock. But he fits in well here, in a city where rising early for a run is virtually a public requirement. Alonso, 44, runs a 10k up to three times per week, and clocks an average kilometre split time of 4min 30sec. His staff are equally active, and have been spotted running together from their hotel in Darling Harbour, on the first leg of Chelsea's pre-season tour in Australia.

Alonso is keeping his athletic spark alive, which is evident on the training ground too, the players in awe of his ability to, in the words of Levi Colwill, "spray passes around for no reason".

"When I am ten years older, maybe I can't do that, so I will be more on the sidelines," Alonso says, smiling. "But while I still can, I enjoy it. I like to feel it and I like to be close to the players. That energy, it goes both ways. It is for them and for me."

Pep Guardiola would be just as hands-on in drills when Alonso was a senior player under his watch, briefly, at Bayern Munich, in the twilight of his career. "We were very close, I was very curious," he says. "I was in that moment of my career where I could go to his office, 'Pep, why is this happening? What's going to be the game plan?' Maybe when I was 20, I didn't have that confidence, to go to the manager's office to ask those things. But at that moment, because of the trust, I needed to do that, I wanted to do that."

Alonso picked up a lot from Guardiola but his schooling was much broader; learning from Carlo Ancelotti, Rafael Benítez, José Mourinho, Vicente del Bosque and John Toshack — who gave him his league debut at Real Sociedad. But his father, Miguel Angel "Periko" Alonso, was most influential. Alonso Sr played for Barcelona from 1982 to 1985, winning the 1985 La Liga title, but he was also a manager and coached his son briefly. The young Xabi would watch him, at home in San Sebastián, and not always quietly. "Preparing the training for next day, preparing the team selection, that was in the kitchen," recalls Alonso. "I was next to him. I had an opinion!"

Home and family are big drivers, his wife and children central to his decision to move to London. Alonso cooks, with "two or three" signature dishes, including the tender Basque fish dish, Kokotxas. "The Basque people, we are not obsessed, but we give a lot of importance to food and good restaurants," he says. He has already started scouting places to eat in



Alonso gets his message across in training before the pre-season trip to Sydney, where he has looked relaxed, below

London. "I was in a brasserie in Chelsea that is close to the stadium," he says. "My wife liked it. We will have enough time [to find others]."

Alonso, then, is already feeling more settled now and that comes across, his demeanour relaxed, and at ease, certainly compared with his first media briefing last month. He is sitting at a catwalk bar in the Presidential suite of the W Hotel, a luxury penthouse atop the team's five-star hotel with sweeping views of Darling Harbour, the afternoon sunlight slipping into the room.

Alonso has now been in the job for nearly a month and knows more about what his squad needs. One of those things is evidently maturity and experience, given Danny Welbeck, 35, has arrived and Jordan Henderson, 36, is on the way. "For me, you need the right balance of personalities, of maturity stages, early

twenties with early thirties and in between, players in different stages of their careers," he says, in words that are striking for a Chelsea coach to utter, given their recruitment over the past four years. "There's not a formula for that, but there is a feeling for that. After, the qualities and the way they

interact. If they have good qualities and good interaction between them, you create good connections and good bonds and that helps the team spirit. For me, this is as important as tactics. First, it is the team spirit. After, it is playing good football. After, it is winning games. Then you continue and continue."

Alonso has won the game's highest honours, the Champions League and the World Cup, as well as Spanish and German titles, and this focus on squad balance is learnt from his experience. "It's from playing football, being in a team," he says. "Sometimes you had, 'Oh, I love playing with this team.' You could feel it. But for that, you need to have this commitment, responsibility, and for me it's been very natural. In the Basque country, we would have a lot of that collective purpose, that culture."

Building a strong culture was key to his success at Bayer Leverkusen, where he banished a defeatist mantra, defined by their derogatory nickname "Neverkusen", symbolic of how the club had only finished as runners-up in major domestic competitions, and replaced it with "Neverlusen", after an unbeaten first double in 2024.

"It was the goal that we wanted to create a good team and to do that, it's not just about getting the best players, it's about getting the best players for the needs and who combine better," Alonso says. "I went there in October. From October until the end of the season, I used that time to get good

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There are not many scars in my career and they've healed. Now I'm motivated to enjoy this next step

knowledge of the players. That gave me more analysis because we couldn't make changes. We got really good. It wasn't created spontaneously, that team spirit in Leverkusen." Success came quickly. "It was unexpectedly fantastic," he says.

Success would not follow at Real Madrid, where he lasted seven months before he was dismissed amid a swirl of politics and player power. For a player whose career arc was stubbornly upward and positive, a setback like this, at the club where he used to play, was a new experience.

"Luckily there are not too many scars in my career," he reflects. "So, OK, I got a scar but this heals. Now it is healed and I am very motivated to enjoy this next step, as I did when I started in Madrid. But you move on. I take the positives and the things that didn't work. I have been very critical of myself, thinking about what I could have done better, because it did not go as expected. But you move on to other things."

He feels disappointment makes him a better coach. "Sure, sure, sure,

because you learn from the disappointment of things that were not meant to be and you try to think that things will be better. There are many [positive] experiences, the adaptation I had to do, some things that worked and some things that didn't in terms of the game, in terms of the man-management. It is a mixture of everything."

Alonso says he needed time to recover. "Mainly to reset the energy because the energy that you need as a manager... you need to be full of energy," he says. "It's very important for me to transmit this passion, this enthusiasm for the game in every training session, every game plan. I used that time mainly for that. I didn't watch much [football]. It was mainly about myself, about feeling it."

Chelsea hired him to lift them out of a hole, and to build an elite performance culture, with a squad that has, for the past year, been heavily criticised. They finished tenth last year. Why pick Chelsea? He points to his head. "For sure, it had to be a lot from here," he says before pointing to his stomach. "And also from here. It has to be from the guts."

"I saw it was good timing from the club, good timing for myself, a good opportunity. It is a team that has played really well recently and the situation was not as bad as it looked at the end of last season. There is a big potential to improve and let's see how long [it takes]. Making the changes, we have started analysing with the team, looking for the future. We are in that process. I felt I had the chance to enjoy being a manager."

The conversations with Chelsea included Alonso raising concerns about the club and them reaching a consensus on direction. "The conversation was about the project because I had a view of Chelsea from the outside," he says. "I could see the positives and my concerns. So I addressed them. The club, the sporting directors... it has been a process for them, some good things and others things they want to correct. We had the same ideas, the same analysis to start the momentum working together and that is why we are taking the steps together, the decisions to have a good team."

He holds the title of manager, a first for the BlueCo ownership since their takeover in 2022. "To compare is difficult," he says. "For sure, I have things to say. But it is not only my decision, it is a collective decision. We analyse, we take the decision with the commitment that we believe is the right one. Afterwards, if it is the right one, we can say we have done good. If it doesn't work, because this is football, we can say it was a collective decision. For me that's important."

"It is not that I have the full power and I have the full vision. I like to have good people around because it is not like I have the whole truth of everything. I like to have people to get that knowledge, to have information so I do not have to take all the decisions."

Without alignment, he would not be leading this fresh start. "For me, the most important point is that we made the same analysis," he says. "If we had different ideas, it probably would not have been the right starting point. So far we are taking the right ones, this is our feeling."

Sport Cricket

Retracing Arlott's steps to a club

Mike Atherton visits Chardstock, 40 years after it featured in a documentary by the legendary broadcaster



Forty years ago John Arlott narrated a beautiful short film about village cricket. Specifically, about one village cricket club, Chardstock, in Devon. Its tone was, at once, celebratory and elegiac. "It's a club; not just a cricket club but a village cricket club, to which the young aspire and the old return," said Arlott in his distinctive Hampshire burr towards the end of the film.

Yet dotted throughout were premonitions: the village population was tiny, just 300 people; jobs and opportunities for the young were scarce; there were limited incentives to stay, and house prices were rising quickly. "Outsiders" and second-home owners were arriving. "Can you imagine Chardstock without a cricket club?" asked one former player in the film. "It could happen," said another.

What, then, has happened to Chardstock and its cricket club in the decades since?

There cannot be many lovelier places to be on a summer's weekend than this village on the border between Dorset, Devon and Somerset, though the heatwave has lent the surrounding landscape a burnt look. Nestled among the Blackdown Hills, between the towns of Axminster and Chard, the village must be among the prettiest in the land, with its thatched, flintstone cottages and narrow, flower-lined lanes.

Not much has changed in the village in the four decades since the film was made, though a housing estate on the outskirts has lifted the population to about 900, according to the last census. The pub, The George, is in the midst of a battle between the villagers and private developers and is no longer serving, much to the distress of the cricketers who must drink after the match in the club's pavilion instead.

It remains a village, though; "an entity", as Arlott described it. The post office, community shop and school remain, as does the cricket club, founded in 1887, and the heartbeat of the community, still. St Andrew's church retains some of its 15th-century fabric and it was here that one of the players, the electrician Nathan Copp, got married two weekends before. Absences for his stag do and wedding had weakened the team in the previous month.

The main character in Arlott's film was Dick ("Dicker") Parris, who ran a wholesale dairy business, selling milk, cheese and eggs. "When he speaks cricket, he speaks Chardstock cricket," said Arlott of Dicker, who was the driving force behind the club, as player and much more besides. Aged 79 now, and in his 60th consecutive year — bar one — tending the ground, I find Dicker inspecting his pitch before the weekend match.

"It will play all right," he says, "it always does. It's never been dangerous but some of the pitches we used to play on elsewhere were atrocious. We've a problem with Leather Jackets [daddy longlegs larvae] on the square at the moment;



Main: a classic village cricket scene at Chardstock, as evocative now as it was 40 years ago. **Above and below:** children and Tilly, the spaniel, help fetch the ball, while a plaque remembers a club legend and renowned conductor



that's why you can see these little holes everywhere." And this large man, dressed in his oversized T-shirt and slacks, moves away from the roller and points here and there to the offending intruders.

In the pavilion, Dicker points to a photograph of the Chardstock team from 1923, which includes four players with the surname Parris, all forebears. A Parris — Ben — played in the very first team recorded in the late 19th century and Dicker's son, Stuart, now keeps the family tradition going. In the Arlott film, Stuart was the teenager pulling the roller in the opening credits; now 53, he is the team's wicketkeeper, having played the odd game for Somerset Seconds back in the day.

"We once had a team made up of three families only: Parris, Larcombe and Strawbridge," says Dicker. Most weekends, these three families still provide players and it was only in the 1960s, in response to National Service, that the club loosened its rules, allowing those not born, living

or connected by family to the village to play.

The ground itself remains much as it was in Dicker's playing days, sloping fiercely, which is a bonus for those wanting an uninterrupted view to the valley and fields beyond, but a challenge for the players.

"The leading bowler at Chardstock is likely to have one leg shorter than the other," said Arlott, and that remains the case. The wooden pavilion is relatively new, as is the car park and pizza oven, the latter of which was built during the pandemic after an ECB grant provided in England's World Cup-winning year of 2019.

Dicker was born in Chardstock; he first played for the club as a teenager and continued until he was 52, when knee and vascular trouble stopped him. His great mate and the other key player in the 1980s film was Barry Hutchings, a demon left-arm spinner,



“The leading bowler at Chardstock is likely to have one leg shorter than the other,” said Arlott

whose job, memorably described by Arlott, was a "pebble picker" on the nearby Dorset beaches. Barry is no longer alive, but his son, Robbie, is now the club's captain.

The Hutchings connection to the club also runs deep. There is a Hutchings in the first recorded team and the 1923 photograph includes "Jolly" Hutchings — so known because of his cheerful nature which he carried into

his batting — who was the best rabbit in the village.

Robbie is a plumber and his 14-year-old son, Harry, plays — though not this week, having been left out with the team at near full strength. Having played minor counties cricket and grade cricket in Adelaide, Robbie is the club's best player — he averaged 105 in 17 games last year — scoring nearly 30 per cent of the team's runs. He could easily play a



that is still village's beating heart



PHIL MINGO/PPAUK FOR THE TIMES

Clockwise from above: Nathaniel Giles-Jones makes his first hundred for the club; the teas are rated among the best in the division; Dicker today at the club, in the Arlott documentary from 1986 and meeting our man Atherton during his recent visit



higher standard elsewhere, and has done so before, but has been drawn back to Chardstock.

He keeps the fabric of the club together. Every village club, indeed every non-professional club, relies on the commitment of a small number of volunteers like Robbie. "Getting a team out can be a challenge. In 2017, we won the league and used just 12 or 13 players all year. That was easy; no one wanted to miss out that year. It's not usually like that, though."

"Mostly, it's a case of ringing people up and begging, borrowing and stealing players. The same worries from the mid-1980s [outlined in the film] are still there. House prices are always going up; new people arrive, which is essential because it's the lifeblood of the village. In a village of a hundred people, you'd hope 99 would want to play cricket, but it's not like that."

"All Saints [the club in the documentary who were Chardstock's adversaries and main rivals], no longer exists. Uplyme and Lyme Regis



[another local club] no longer play in the league. I don't think there is as much cricket played now as there was, but the standard is higher. We're lucky; Chardstock's been here for ever; it's home; it's nearly folded a few times but we're still going strong."

Robbie's first job was on Dicker's dairy round. A generation apart, they have helped keep the club going for more than half a century, both practically and spiritually. Says one of

the players: "You can't change much in the world, but you can make your own little patch and they do it with joy and enthusiasm. Both Dicker and Robbie are universally respected and loved here. They have great values. One of my sons got annoyed once and told the opposition batsman to 'piss off', and Robbie told him to apologise immediately."

The first recorded team for Chardstock included two shoemakers from the village, the publican from The George, the vicar, a wheelwright, a thatcher and a blacksmith — men who, while never aspiring to gentry class, had enough independence to take time off for a game.

The president now is Vyvyan Eames, whose family owns much of the land around the club and who have been farming here for generations. The team, though, has a less agrarian feel than before. It includes three teachers, a plumber, an electrician, a master builder, a driver, an air conditioning expert and a number of players of school age. It's a

cross-section of society, as is the case with most clubs. "If you needed a house put up, the Chardstock team could do it in a jiffy," says one. Indeed, the players themselves built the new pavilion in 2005, though it needed a financial helping hand from the club president at the time, Sir Neville Marriner, to compete the task.

Marriner, a world-famous conductor, had a house in the village, but, says one, cricket enables everyone to look at the other "eye-to-eye".

"The standard of cricket we play? I wouldn't say it's rock bottom, but it's near the bottom," said Dicker in the film. One of the abiding themes was the club's wariness about competitive league cricket, the seriousness with which it would be played and the desire not to dilute "the Chardstock way". In fact, the club joined the Devon league shortly afterwards, in the late 1980s, and has hovered around midpoint in the county's league rankings ever since.

This match, Chardstock against Cullompton 2nd XI, is in the E

Division East, which is ranked eighth of 18 divisions in Devon. The usual challenges remain: there is a shortage of balls at the start of play; during the last home match a few were hit into the hedge and the local Labrador, Gunna, is ageing and not quite the leather-sniffing hound he used to be. Robbie has gone in the side and cannot bowl; another is missing because of harvest (the earliest anyone can remember), and the opening bowler has a touch of gout.

While the club does not run a women's team, this is not an all-male affair. Jen umpires from week to week and carries an air of authority that would make you think twice about disputing her decisions. She's taken her level one umpiring course. "I don't need more than that, this is E Division East, for goodness' sake," she says firmly.

Here, she must umpire at both ends, as the opposition have not brought their own. Cullompton's opening bowler is Issy, who learnt her cricket in Sussex and stayed local after graduating from Exeter University, and who more than holds her own. Hannah, the club secretary, and Vicky are on hand for tea, responsibility for which is shared week to week between families. Chardstock teas are among the best in the division. "We don't do teas by halves here," says Hannah.

In about 33°C heat, Robbie has never been more popular than when he calls correctly and — as in the original film — it is Chardstock to bat. Inevitably, Robbie plays a

“

Robbie has gone in the side; another is missing because of harvest, and the opening bowler has gout

significant role: the strike rate picks up when he walks in, but the pace of play slows, on account of the number of balls hit into the neighbouring field. Fortunately, two-year-old cocker spaniel Tilly is on hand to take Gunna's place. The age range of the team is 16 to 58 and one of the younger players, Nathaniel, the air conditioning man, makes his first hundred for the club.

Though three players from the original film have died, and one is out of contact, half-a-dozen others have come back for the day and are photographed on the bench named after the captain at the time, Frank Huddy. The inscription reads: "In memory of FRH. Professor of Cricketology. Inventor of attacking shots. Master of guile and flight. Tactician extraordinaire."

Said Arlott of Chardstock and village cricket more generally: "The stories are always the same; only the characters change."

So, as the sun lowers towards the Blackdown Hills, the pizza oven is lit, the honesty bar empties and the stories begin. There are jobs to do and, as Dicker looks on from the pavilion balcony, it's Robbie who chivvies everyone along; sightcreens to a safe place, boundary ropes to the shed, sprinkler to the middle to moisten the square for next week.

Within moments of the sprinkler starting up, Wilf, the four-year-old son of one of the players, darts in and out of the water, cooling himself off. The next generation on their way.

Sport

FA propped up Infantino

Martin Samuel on governing body finally finding a backbone

Page 48

40 years of village cricket

Mike Atherton retraces footsteps of John Arlott in Chardstock

Pages 50-51



Finucane wins fourth gold to make history

Rick Broadbent

It all ended in tears. On the final afternoon of the Commonwealth Games, Emma Finucane stood on the podium as *Land of My Fathers* played, a record four gold medals in the bag for the sprint cyclist. "Ten-year-old Emma was screaming inside, 'What is going on!'" she said.

Finucane's win in the keirin made her the first sprint cyclist to bag a quartet of titles at the same Games and, after two bronze medals from Birmingham in 2022, she is now Wales's most successful Games athlete in any sport, ahead of the sprinter Olivia Breen. She fended off the Olympic and Commonwealth champion, Ellesse Andrews, of New Zealand, to complete her set after golds in the team sprint, individual sprint and 1,000m time-trial.

It was a dominant series but she rejected the suggestion she was now in the same elite class as Sir Chris Hoy and Dame Laura Kenny. "I am not in their boat," she said. "I nearly Continued on page 47

Alonso: Why I took the Chelsea job

New manager says team 'aren't as bad as they looked' last season and that scars of Real failure will help him in west London

Peter Rutzler Sydney

Xabi Alonso insists Chelsea are "not as bad" as they looked last season and the manager has a gut feeling they are ready to make real improvements after they wrapped up their pre-season tour to Australia.

Speaking in Sydney, the 44-year-old acknowledged Chelsea's struggles after

a tenth-place Premier League finish last term, but suggested there was much more to come.

"It is a team that has played really well recently and the situation was not as bad as it looked at the end of last season," he said. "There is a big potential to improve. Making the changes, we have started analysing with the team, looking for the future. We are in that

process. I felt I had the chance to enjoy being a manager."

The Basque-born former midfielder said conversations with the club's hierarchy assured him they were heading in the right direction. "I saw it was good timing from the club [to join], good timing for myself," he said. "I addressed my concerns. We had the same ideas, same analysis to start the momentum work-

ing together. It is not that I have the full power... it is a collective decision."

Alonso accepted the Stamford Bridge job after a turbulent seven-month spell in charge of Real Madrid, but insisted the setback in Spain had made him a better coach.

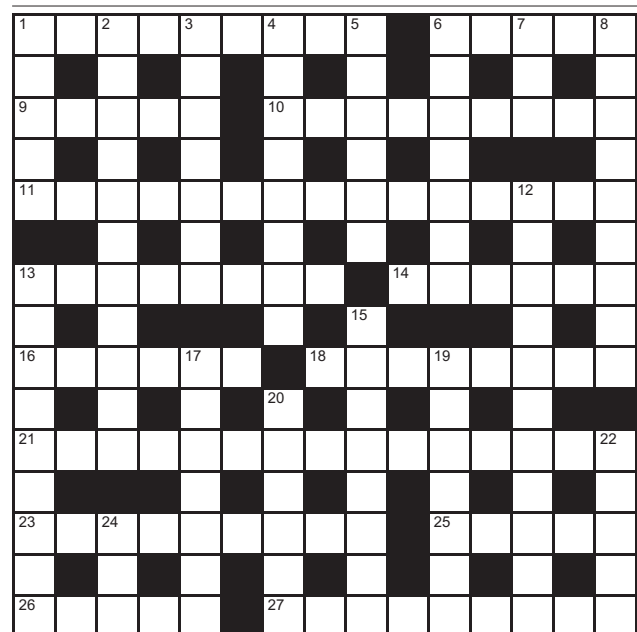
"Luckily there are not too many scars in my career," Alonso said. "So, OK, I got a scar, but this heals. Looking back

I take the positives and the things that didn't work. I have been very critical about myself... but you move on."

As for what he learnt, he said: "There are many [positive] experiences, the adaptation I had to do, some things that worked and some things that didn't in terms of the game, the man management. It is a mixture of everything."

Full interview, page 49

Times Crossword 29,611



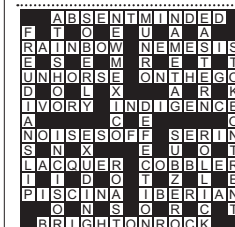
ACROSS

- 1 Exclusive phenomenon in school with drug problem? (4-5)
- 6 Leader of Russia set about a religious adherent (5)
- 9 Simple argument ignored by litigant (5)
- 10 Refuse pile of cash forged with paper (9)
- 11 Aristotle unsure about high-stakes game (7,8)
- 13 Founder of company drinks, we hear (8)
- 14 Advice to acrobat parting with one dog? (6)
- 16 Embarrassed to secure victory, prepare to play again? (6)
- 18 Encouraged her detox breaks (8)
- 21 Show herald checking boat motor for Prince of Wales, perhaps (8,7)
- 23 Warnings on course to stop creature in national park (3,6)
- 25 Finish off second young boxer, for example (3,2)
- 26 Agent turning back to bury note in battlefield (5)
- 27 Sang to plug quiet houses close to Oxford (9)

DOWN

- 1 Excitable letters from wealthy person (5)
- 2 Artisan back from calling girl on phone (5,6)
- 3 Lingo in American bar (7)
- 4 Criminal boy is breaking paintings, say (8)
- 5 She reduced space for psychedelic plant (6)
- 6 Check on regular beat (7)
- 7 Take action against tribe's broadcast (3)
- 8 Perceive collar (9)
- 12 Drunk lost footing, striking leader's mum (5-6)
- 13 Aren't City developing confidence? (9)
- 15 Will individual suit and uniform spoil climbing? (8)
- 17 Anxious over sun exploding (7)
- 19 One rowing with old guy supporting Arsenal's front three (7)
- 20 Supporters skipping starter for dessert (6)
- 22 Surprise attack captures head of Persian fleet (5)
- 24 Conscious after being shelled in combat (3)

Prize solution 29,604



Check today's answers by ringing 0905 757 0141 by midnight. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke 0333 202 3390.

The winners of Prize Crossword No 29,604 are
J Bush, Exeter, Devon
S Cruickshank, Newcastle upon Tyne
I Reeve, Reading, Berkshire
N Twickel, Tidmington, Warwickshire
A Ward, Ipswich, Suffolk

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Do any diets work?

Meal replacement shakes

The ultimate
ultra-processed food

Raw food

If you want a
crash diet to lose
a lot of weight

Atkins

Lost two pounds
in two weeks

This evolutionary biologist
tried them all

times2

The Beckhams versus the Peltzes? I know who I feel most sorry for

Polly Vernon



Having just read extracts from *Brand Beckham*, Alison Boshoff's forthcoming book about the Beckhams, I find myself feeling unexpectedly sorry for Brooklyn Peltz Beckham, the eldest child of Victoria and David.

Brooklyn's estrangement and the resulting rupture in the family's public façade has fixated the nation since January, when he posted on Instagram (where else?) an inflammatory condemnation of his parents, their perceived manipulations and exploitations, their comportment at his wedding and through much of his childhood.

"I have been silent for years ..." Brooklyn's statement began, "Unfortunately, my parents and their team have continued to go to the press, leaving me with no choice but to speak for myself and tell the truth about only some of the lies that have been printed. I do not want to reconcile with my family..."

The ructions apparently started when Brooklyn married Nicola Peltz — an actress, now 31 — in a ceremony at Palm Beach in 2022. She is the youngest daughter of the billionaire Nelson and the model Claudia, which makes her part of a family richer and more powerful than the Beckhams. A family that doesn't, seemingly, understand or tolerate the sort of control, over image and narrative, that the Beckhams seem to exert over those entering their orbit.

You can almost imagine the clash of cultures when the families met. The initial confusion, the bewilderment, giving in to *fury*, when these two separate institutions, each so used to getting their own way, was suddenly confronted by the other, by their expectations, their entitlement.

I met Nicola in 2022, just after she married Brooklyn. The interview was far more revealing and honest than I'd anticipated. Nicola is, I suspect, fearless in the way of one raised to protect and defend herself, however necessary, and with more

than enough money to do so. We talked about the wedding, of course. She gave me clarification on her wedding dress: Valentino Couture, rather than Victoria Beckham, a move that had been widely perceived as a snub to her mother-in-law, very much part of the catalyst of the rift.

According to her, that was not at all how it went down — but I'll get to that.

According to the extracts from Boshoff's book published in the Mail, trouble had been brewing for much longer, anyway.

Victoria and David had, apparently, not been on speaking terms with Brooklyn or Nicola for months before the ceremony, during which time the wedding began to seem a little... extreme. Five sets of wedding planners were hired, four dispensed with (one of them, Nicole Braghin and Arianna Grijalba, who lasted nine days, said it felt like they had inherited a crime scene, rather than a wedding plan). Nicola's mother, Claudia, had the Valentino atelier sew an evil eye inside her daughter's wedding dress "for protection". And as for Brooklyn? His contribution to proceedings amounted to him wondering if they should get special guns in, to bring down any drones released by paparazzi, and if the reception's fast food van might offer guests a special "Nicola" burger — with lettuce and no bun. And Nicola, at one point, apparently asked if all guests could be presented with a dog as a leaving gift.

Tensions were running high by the day itself, which descended into what Boshoff described as "chaos and infighting". First came the revelation of *The Dress*, then came David, who gave a speech considered (by sources) to be too long and too focused on his

relationship with his son. "It was as if David was getting married to Brooklyn," one guest said.

Later Marc Anthony performed (a gift from the Beckhams, but one that, apparently, cost Nelson Peltz, billionaire father of the bride, \$250,000 in staging costs), and Victoria danced with her son in a way he would describe as "inappropriate" and (more damningly) as being "on" him, as opposed to "with" him. Nicola is supposed to have run from the marquee in tears, followed by much of her family. Brunch the next day chez the Peltzes was characterised by a guest as being "like someone had died".

After which things appeared to only get worse. I'd say it all "culminated" with Brooklyn's post, but given his reference to addressing "only some of the lies" perhaps it was more of a warning shot of what may come next.

In our interview Nicola was sweet and courteous. She told me she runs a charity rehousing rescue dogs. (I don't know but suspect it was these dogs she suggested giving out to wedding guests, which puts a rather more compassionate complexion on it.) We talked about her *situation*; I was struck by her not seeming able to comfortably speak her in-laws' names as she explained how she'd wanted to wear a VB wedding dress: "I was so excited to start the design process. Um, and then Victoria, um, was like... And then she, Victoria, uh, was very busy... and a few days went by, and I didn't hear anything..."

I also got the sense Nicola loves her husband very much. I feel sorry, now, for him. So cursed by the situation of his birth, so doomed to unasked for, unwarranted celebrity, and all the accompanying sneering. So

pushed and pulled between two powerful houses, neither of which can help itself in the briefings and manoeuvrings, designed to

preserve money and reputation. So anxious — this, according to Boshoff's sources — and so ordinary (according to my observations). No one, I think, is more in need of a normal, boring life, than Brooklyn Peltz Beckham. And no one is less likely to get one.

Monopoly with real cash and Gucci: life at an Oxford summer camp

As an undergraduate **Emily Formstone** worked with children whose parents had paid for them to experience the dreaming spires. It was an eye-opener

Oxford in summertime is *Brideshead Revisited* land. Each year, when the final term rolled around, it was as if the Eighties TV version was reeling out before me in the form of plummy accents, draughty shirts and "the rare glory of her summer days" described by Evelyn Waugh. But in the long vacation the undergraduates empty out to their corners of the country and a new breed fills the city: the elite summer camp attendee.

I made my first foray into the world of these camps at the end of my second year at Oxford. I was planning on staying in the city over the vac to make a dent in my sprawling reading list but my student loan had run dry so a friend suggested taking a job at one of the many summer camps held in the cloistered colleges. The camps weren't affiliated with the university so, to make them seem more legitimate, the operating companies were keen for students to be on staff. I got accepted easily and was paid the minimum hourly wage.

Having attended summer camps throughout my childhood, rocking up on the first day, kitted out with my dorky staff T-shirt and lanyard, felt like a full-circle moment. I was no longer the excited attendee, brimming with hopes and nerves, but the happy-clappy camp helper from films like *The Parent Trap*, there to be your friendly big sister for the next two weeks. This illusion was fast fading.

The kids showed up, most of them landing from Dubai and America, and I quickly learnt that they (well, their parents) were paying upwards of £6,000 for the fortnight. With this, the group of seemingly ordinary-looking 16 and 17-year-olds came into focus, the designer handbags, the four-figure

trainers, the limited-edition hoodies and all. My charity shop garb suddenly felt a bit cheap and cheerful.

One of the first topics of conversation was their parents' wealth. "What do your parents do?" seemed to be the international elite's equivalent to "What school did you go to?" here in England. One boy spied for several minutes about how stressful it was for his mother to have to look after so many stocks and investments. Another girl told me she was engaged to be married, but before taking over her boyfriend's family's business empire (her words) wanted to brush up on her economics, hence the camp.

The kids would stay in the empty college rooms — or staircases as they're known in Oxford. My brief was to look after the teens when they weren't in lessons: organising meals, activities and day trips, and making sure they were in bed at the right time.

We did our best to keep them entertained. But kids used to helicopter rides and the Dubai Mall are less easy to please than your average teenagers. Botanic gardens? Not interested. The Ashmolean Museum? Boring. Blenheim Palace? Snooze! Afternoon tea? Yucky, "too British-tasting". They didn't mind the Westgate shopping centre and took a particular shine to the designer outlets in Bicester Village.

At the weekend we took them into London for a bit of culture, but they quickly turned their backs on the British Museum in favour of the more modern treasures of Bond Street. One student looked particularly smitten on his return to the coach. He showed off his new plain white T-shirt — his for just £500 from the Gucci store. I wondered if this was really within his pocket money's reach or if, at the ripe old age of 16, he was caught up in the general atmosphere of financial one-upmanship that lingered in the camp.



David and Victoria Beckham with Brooklyn and Nicola in 2023



"Where did you go?" I cooed to another group returning to the coach. As a teenager on trips from the home counties to London I was keen on Camden Market and the big Lush store on Oxford Street. "Um, I think it was called... Harrods?" one answered. "Ah yes," I said. "Where else?"

I felt the camp itself was, like my uniform, rather cheap and cheerful in its operation. We had a shoestring budget for meals, snacks and activity running costs despite the ludicrous fees; the organisers were selling the impressive façade of Oxford — just enough so parents could boast about it — but with seemingly little academic or cultural depth behind it.

But we wanted the kids to have a good experience, so we got creative. We set up quiz nights and treasure hunts, which were surprisingly a hit. One particular scavenger hunt ended with the winning team returning suspiciously quickly. They soon admitted they had employed a taxi driver to whizz them around the cobbled streets and so outpaced their footbound opponents. The irony was that the hundreds of pounds wasted on the taxi driver won them the grand prize of a summer camp-branded key ring. Probably, I suspect, worth no more than £2. It's the glory that counts, as they say. The suspects in question were three girls and one particularly boisterous boy (the one with the Gucci T-shirt), the self-styled leader of the pack who insisted that the girls now refer to him as "king". A thank-you token for footing the taxi bill.

One day a group of children seemed particularly settled at the activities marquee. I saw the flash of a tiny top hat-wearing man and thought, wow! Monopoly! Who would have thought this was the activity to tame them? Getting closer, ready to pull up a chair and buy my share of Park Lane, I noticed there was something wrong with the Monopoly money: it wasn't the nostalgic pastel-coloured sheets of paper but reams

"We tried to keep the kids engaged. Blenheim Palace? Snooze! Afternoon tea? Yucky!"



of cold, hard cash. Monopoly was of little interest to them, though gambling certainly was. Shutting down the game was almost as awkward as confiscating a pack of pink, gold-filtered cigarettes from one of the girls — the most expensive pack I have seen. The campers let out a sigh when they learnt we'd binned them.

Luckily, unlike some other staff, it wasn't in my job description to stay overnight. After evening registration at about 10pm I left the worries behind. One night we were short-staffed so I did join the evening "patrol". "I'm anticipating shithousery," one of my colleagues wrote in our group chat. "This could be messy," another chimed. What we found during the patrol was unexpected. Not the drugs and sneaking around witnessed on other nights, but lying on one of the American girls' desks was a roughly 6in knife that she'd forgotten to put away. It was terrifying to see. Her father had insisted that England was a dangerous place and that she needed protection. God knows how she got it through airport security.

One Oxford institution the kids did take to was punting, though a bit of pretend jousting with the punt sticks resulted in a trip to A&E with me, another camp helper and a sweet Italian boy. "How does it look?" he asked under the harsh lights of the waiting room, turning to me with puppy eyes that — deep breath — happened to be missing an eyelid. I said nothing but the sheer fear and pallor it brought forward in my face managed to make him laugh. A job well done, I suppose.

Two weeks of pure chaos drew to a close with a traditional Oxford bop — a "big organised party". At the end of the preceding meal one of the pluckier students took the stage of the portrait-clad dining hall and began to address his peers. His speech was eloquently delivered and articulate. But he ended on a disturbingly confident note. "We are the leaders of the future!" he declared and, sitting there, it was clear that the room believed it.

Help! My folks are crazy about Korean culture

From making kimchi to watching K-drama, they're fully addicted, says **Euan Dawtrey**

Even gyrating porcelain dolls with floppy hair have finished the European leg of their comeback tour. Yes, BTS are back from their military service and bigger than ever, underlining the enduring pull of Korean culture on the youth of today. But over the past couple of years I've watched the Korean wave consume an altogether more unexpected demographic: my cultured, middle-class parents.

Have you ever gone back to your family home for Christmas and found that someone or something has taken up residence in your absence? This happened to me the year before last.

It's December 2024 and I'm skulking around the house in Stirlingshire, the

her boss, who thinks she is a man but fancies her anyway. And then there's *My Mister*, which probes a cross-generational friendship between a hot, troubled, lonely young woman and a hot, troubled, lonely middle-aged man, and bizarrely (like many K-dramas) wears the influence of Richard Curtis proudly on its sleeve. My parents talk about the emotional expressiveness that verges on melodrama, the extraordinary acting, brilliant writing, beautiful clothes and insight into a remarkable society that has dragged itself from abject poverty to being a global soft power within 70 years.

Having spent the past few weeks watching these shows, I think they may be on to something. South Korea is a country still living with a kind of PTSD from the 20th century —

half-rural central belt of Scotland, to see what has changed. Usually it's just the odd plant but this year there's something weird going on. Something sweet, sour and bacterial is hanging around like an apparition.

In a kitchen corner a gigantic vat of kombucha ferments, its weird tongue swimming in gunk. There's an air of malevolent sentience about this rubbery organ, as though it's about to crawl out of its bowl and violently improve my gut microbiome. Sealed in a clay pot, another mysterious concoction brews, or bubbles, or whatever it is that cabbage does when it's smeared in chili flakes and shut away in the dark. Kimchi is happening, and I think it can talk.

The Vegetarian by the Korean author and Nobel laureate Han Kang is lying on the coffee table. My parents, aged 61 and 67, say that as feminist skewering of the patriarchy goes, it's pretty good. I fear they have morphed into Bristol graduates, riding the Overground from Hackney to Dalston, hellbent on decolonising the curriculum.

Then that unmistakable Duolingo ping echoes from a nearby room and I hear my father, alone in his office, asking a cartoon character for a coffee over and over again in Korean. It certainly isn't very Christmassy, and in their Asiatic stupor they seem to have forgotten to put up a tree. At least there's the gigantic plate of Korean fried chicken cooling on the table.

For the previous six months my parents had been spending their evenings watching K-dramas into the wee hours, which is particularly funny because they spend their working lives making esoteric documentaries about niche cultural topics — at present they are finishing a film about the obscure, idiosyncratic Indian film-maker Ritwik Ghatak. But the thing that has truly captured their imagination is watching K-dramas.

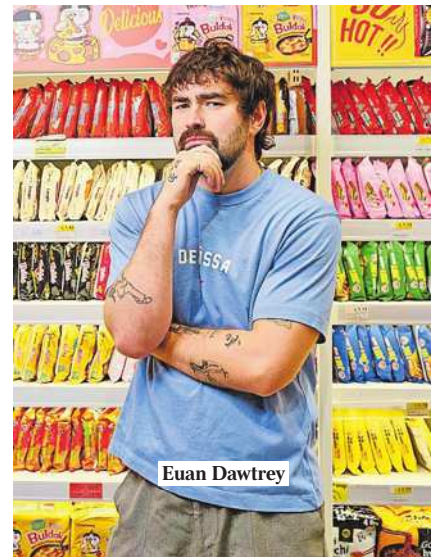
They love *Coffee Prince*, in which a boyish young woman wants to shag

Japanese occupation, the Korean War, partition and the vast collective sacrifices that propelled the nation to its economic success. It's a country weighed down by moral codes and social expectations that feel startlingly foreign to our own, yet familiar from our not-too-distant history.

It's all very fashionable in the right context — but this isn't the right context. This is a middle-class home in Scotland's Small Town of the Year 2013. This is where people go for a nice cushy retirement, where you can open a carpet shop and not immediately file for bankruptcy. Surely not the place to be a Koreaboo couple in your sixties.

It's not easy watching your parents become different people. Rather than staying up till 2am watching attractive Koreans pine after each other, aren't ageing Brits supposed to be listening to Radio 4, gardening and buying National Trust memberships?

Admittedly I'm intrigued enough by my parents' rejection of the good old-fashioned British retirement that I've booked a flight to Seoul in September, not so much for the neo-Confucianism and swooning romance as the fried chicken and beer. Time to order my hanbok.



Euan Dawtrey

KI PRICE FOR THE TIMES

times2

What did we really evolve to eat? This professor ate his way to the truth

To gauge the merits of different diets, the evolutionary biologist Daniel Lieberman tested them on himself — and his wife. This is everything he learnt from what she called his ‘nutso project’. By **Damian Whitworth**

We all know that our modern diet of industrialised food is not great for us. But having

lunch with a professor of evolutionary biology focuses the mind on what ultra-processed foods and 21st-century fads are doing to a species that evolved hundreds of thousands of years ago.

“You and I sitting here looking at this menu is a completely modern, bizarre thing that we never evolved to do,” says Daniel Lieberman, a Harvard academic and bestselling author, as he scrutinises the menu at a restaurant in South Kensington, London. “If you’re a hunter-gatherer, you eat what you hunt or gather. And if you’re a farmer, you eat what you grow. All of a sudden we are in this incredible world of diversity.”

With the average supermarket now stocking thousands of lines, about 70 per cent of which, he says, are “ultra-processed and pretty unhealthy”, it’s not surprising that many of us struggle to eat well.

An expert on how humans evolved, Lieberman’s latest book, *Fed Up: What Evolution Reveals about Food, Diet and Eating Well*, combines a scientific evaluation of the merits of different diets with his reflections on what he and his wife, Tonia, experienced while trying them. A lean, fit runner, Lieberman was not looking to lose weight but to find out first-hand what buying, preparing and eating each diet was really like.

Citing an essay by Isaiah Berlin, in which the philosopher divided thinkers into hedgehogs (who relate everything to a single big idea) and foxes (who embrace complexity and variation), Lieberman says our eating habits should be more vulpine. He is sceptical of hedgehog diets that involve avoiding categories of food. Many people have become dogmatic and “tribal” about what they eat, he says: “It becomes part of their identity.”

Big-idea diets are often embraced by those who are trying to get slimmer but we did not evolve to voluntarily

lose weight, Lieberman says. More than other mammals, we inherited adaptations, specifically hunger, to prevent this, and adapted to store fat to fuel our energy-hungry brains and see us through lean times. “When you go on a diet it’s really hard to overcome hunger. You need superhuman willpower. If you put a chocolate cake in front of me and a carrot, I’d eat the chocolate cake.”

The “miracle” of GLP-1 medicines is that they suppress that appetite. But, he cautions, they do not help people to figure out what to eat, the lost weight includes muscle mass, and what people put back on when they stop taking the drug is fat. “The concern is that we’re putting a large percentage of the population at risk of old-age frailty,” he says.

Of the diets he tried, meal replacement shakes were perhaps the most unsatisfactory. He drank them for breakfast and lunch for two weeks. The “gloppy” 400-calorie shakes, containing 20g of protein, 36g of carbs, 24g of fat and a load of micronutrients, left him reasonably satiated but he hated the sensory deprivation and questions the long-term consequences of eating what he calls the ultimate ultra-processed food.

Almost as unenjoyable was subsisting on a raw food diet. “Just appalling,” Lieberman exclaims. As they diced, pureed, grated and soaked ingredients, then munched joylessly through salads and smoothies, his wife became “depressed and sad” and sneaked out for a bagel. He lost weight and felt sluggish. “Tonia lasted three days and I lasted about four.”

It feels appropriate for me to order the raw salad of courgette, peach, mint and pine nuts, followed by ricotta ravioli. Lieberman opts for clams and a green salad.

While chimps spend half their lives chomping highly fibrous wild fruit for



calories, the human digestive system evolved differently; we are now biologically hooked on cooking. Nevertheless, raw foodists insist it is best to eat produce in its natural state. That is sometimes true. Garlic, once cooked, has lower levels of the protein alliin, but heating tomatoes increases the availability of the antioxidant lycopene.

“ Their argument is that eating broccoli could be a death sentence

Cooking increases the speed and efficiency of digestion, enabling us to eat more. Steaming spinach renders a large bag of raw leaves much more manageable. “If you want a crash diet to lose a lot of weight, [the raw diet] may be your diet. But other than that, it’s a struggle,” Lieberman says, adding that a large percentage of the women on raw food diets either don’t

menstruate or have irregular cycles. “From an evolutionary perspective, this is not a good idea.”

Of all the hedgehog diets, the one he is particularly scathing about — and did not try himself — is the carnivore diet. “Those folks really are

selling something that’s quite dangerous.” Hardcore carnivore dieters seek to enter a permanent state of ketosis — burning fat instead of glucose — by severely restricting carbs through the avoidance of all plants. Some humans, such as the Inuit, have survived on very low-carb diets; our species evolved in Africa, where plants were the main source of calories.

“This is a manosphere diet. They are doing harm. Their basic argument is that because plants can’t run away, they produce toxins, and therefore eating a piece of broccoli could be your death sentence,” he says.

Although there is a kernel of truth in their claims about plants producing toxins and antinutrients to defend themselves, the reality is these are neutralised by cooking and other forms of food processing.

Meanwhile, carnivores ignore the evidence of the health benefits of plants, including lowering inflammation (rather than raising it, as a high red meat diet may do), fighting cancer and being a source of fibre, which maintains a healthy microbiome and lowers incidence of numerous diseases.

Lieberman, 62, has studied some of the planet’s last hunter-gatherers, the Hadza, in Tanzania, and tried the paleo diet. He rejects the premise that we should eat like our ancient ancestors, shunning cereals, legumes, dairy and processed foods in favour of grass-fed beef, seafood, eggs, fresh fruit, nuts and vegetables.

The reality was that there was no single Palaeolithic diet and Stone Age humans ate diverse foods. He missed bread and peanuts and found it silly that staples such as beans and grains are forbidden by paleo aficionados, when our Stone Age ancestors ate wild varieties of them. “Their idea of what cavemen ate is wrong,” he says.



Daniel Lieberman

The carnivore diet



While the paleo diet's avoidance of sugar and ultra-processed rubbish is to be welcomed, Lieberman points out the illogicality of assuming that everything our ancestors ate was healthy — and of ignoring foods that arrived with farming.

When he tried the low-carb, high-protein Atkins diet, Tonia announced that she was “done with this nutso project”. His diet of chicken, fish, eggs, yoghurt, cheese, avocados and vegetables such as cauliflower, courgettes and celery left him craving carbs, especially bread, and suffering headaches, brain fog and fatigue. Lieberman lost almost two pounds over two weeks but quickly regained it once he stopped.

Sifting through the tangled literature on saturated fat, “bad” cholesterol and arterial plaque build-up proved the hardest part of his research.

“Anybody who thinks that they know the truth about saturated fat is delusional. It's complicated,” he says. But while unsaturated fats may not be as bad for us as once thought, there is still much to learn and he suggests that given a choice between saturated or unsaturated fat “you're always better off with the plant fat rather than the animal fat”.

During two weeks of intermittent fasting, he restricted his meals to an eight-hour window. As someone who normally has an early breakfast, and often a hobbit-like second breakfast after exercising, and is used to snacking through the day, he sometimes got “hangry” but found the experience, during which he lost about a pound, generally benign.

Only time will tell if either intermittent fasting or calorie-restriction diets slow humans' ageing. More research is needed. From an evolutionary perspective, intermittent fasting makes more sense,

he suggests, as humans have adapted to experiencing regular periods of hunger and these periods prompt cellular housekeeping.

Studies show that such bouts of hunger slow ageing in rodents but humans are different, Lieberman says. The jury is out. Personally, he finds calorie restriction in an attempt to live to 100 nonsensical if it involves giving up many of the pleasures that would make it worth living that long.

The diet Lieberman found most agreeable was the Mediterranean diet. He had oats, fruit and nuts for breakfast; lunches of hummus with vegetables, cheese and his beloved peanuts; grains, legumes and fresh vegetables for dinner, with fish at least twice a week. The health benefits of the Mediterranean diet, which involves cooking with olive oil and using animal fats sparingly, are well documented.

“Any traditional, non-overly processed farming diet is fine. I don't think the Mediterranean is any better than a traditional Meso-American diet. But Mediterranean is the best studied. My book basically boils down to saying that Michael Pollan was right.” The journalist, author and academic famously pronounced: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”

Although he does not disagree with those who are strong critics of ultra-processed foods, there can be “a little bit of hedgehogness there. With eight billion people on the planet, we're not getting away from food processing. The solution is to have better processed food.”

Lieberman is sceptical of “blue zones” — purportedly healthy enclaves identified in areas such as eastern Sardinia, Italy, and Okinawa, Japan, with an unusually high proportion of elderly residents.

While he found the mostly vegetarian, bean-rich diet, with occasional servings of fish, to be easy to follow and seemingly healthy, he questions whether it creates anti-ageing hotspots and regards it as “statistical absurdity” to base a diet on evidence gleaned from a tiny number of centenarians. “If you want to live to 100, you'd better have the right parents. Exercise, diet, sleep, stress, don't smoke, don't drink too much. [With] many of these diets, people are trying to make money.”

Most of the time Lieberman eats an approximation of the Mediterranean diet. He consumes almost no red meat, for health reasons and because he feels the carbon footprint is too high. “No hunter-gatherer is ever a vegetarian. We wouldn't be here if our ancestors hadn't started hunting and eating meat. Which doesn't mean that you should.”

Like Epicurus, he believes in moderation. “I know people who will never eat dessert. I feel sad for them. I don't think the raw foodists intend to do harm or the paleo diet folks. We all just have to relax a little bit.”

Even my raw salad gets a thumbs-up. “That looks lovely. I'm pretty non-judgmental. I'm not opposed to raw food. Eating it nonstop for several days was the challenge. Bon appétit.”

Fed Up: What Evolution Reveals about Food, Diet and Eating Well by Daniel Lieberman (Allen Lane £25). To order a copy go to timesbookshop.co.uk. Free UK standard P&P on orders over £25. Special discount available for Times members

No more hook-ups — at 42, I've lost my libido

Sex used to be central to Kristie De Garis's life. Then she discovered it wasn't any more

S ometime in my late thirties my sex drive abandoned me. I quickly worked through the five stages of grief, then stumbled upon a secret sixth phase no one talks about: relief.

The first signs surfaced alongside a surprise text from someone I hadn't thought about in many years. A picture of his abs, still eight of them, still rippling. I remembered the time in my early twenties when, not even slightly ironically, I'd licked them from top to bottom. That version of me would have replied immediately, dropped everything and taken a speedy taxi to his flat. Instead I finished Alfred Lansing's book about the Endurance and forgot to reply until the next day. “I'm flattered. You look great. But full disclosure, I think I might be post-sex.”

Sex being anything other than central to my life is not something my younger self could have fathomed. Throughout my late teens, twenties and most of my thirties it was the cornerstone on which everything else was built.

The Noughties had taught me that a high sex drive was to be prized, touted even. A voracious sexual appetite was empowering. Wanting sex every day made you pretty cool, actually. Britney Spears with a writhing golden snake around her neck definitely had a high sex drive. Christina Aguilera wearing leather chaps in a boxing ring had a high sex drive. Angelina Jolie, with a vial of blood around her neck, listening to Billy Bob Thornton tell a reporter how they'd had sex in the car on the way over, had a high sex drive too. I took their lead and committed to being constitutionally horny.

My body had its insistent, ungovernable agenda, a thrumming restlessness that made me only half present in the rest of my life. Always waiting, perpetually unsettled. My sex drive was a luminous distraction from the mundane. For 20 years that was my implacable reality.

Then somewhere in my late thirties, the hold my libido had on me began to loosen. I noticed that sex, on the other side of the thick monotony of dating app conversations, didn't seem as alluring. Suddenly, UTIs were a thing I wanted to avoid. Within my body, the heady peaks of desire no longer existed. That thrilling, visceral feeling I had subsisted on was no longer available to me.

At first I was concerned. I put it down to some sort of basic deficit. But when no amount of vitamin D and B6 could shift the new unsexy baseline, it began to feel more like a personal failing, like lying or being selfish, things that mark you out as being deficient in the fundamentals of human decency.

Determined to pin this on physiology, at 40 I spoke to a specialist about the possibility of perimenopause and they agreed that I was exhibiting some symptoms, even outside low sex drive.



Kristie De Garis

After starting HRT — spray in the morning, pills at night — I felt the occasional stirring of familiar feverish urges that never quite managed to reassert themselves. I tried faking it, tried pushing through initial flirtations to no avail. I just couldn't conjure the enthusiasm for sex that had once driven me.

It's been a few years now and I've surrendered to a life where sex still exists but very much peripherally. A life where, for months at a time, it is entirely in my blind spot. And instead of feeling lost, I feel lightened.

For women of my generation, any generation, wanting sex has never been simple. It has always come with loaded expectations, skewed dynamics and a stacked ledger of what you owe and what you are worth. A high sex drive sounds like freedom on paper but, looking back, a high sex drive never translated into an effort to meet my own sexual needs. I was too busy thinking about what he wanted and what I looked like by wanting it.

I've spoken to friends who are also walking this vast post-sex landscape. Some are unquestioningly embracing a life free from the exigency of sexual desire. Others aren't quite ready to let go and are exploring all possibilities. But my experience is that this is not necessarily something to fix. I see it as more of a shift. A broadening of focus.

And that focus has turned inward to what I specifically want to do with my time and attention. And it turns out the answer is almost entirely unsexy. There are no abs, no late-night hook-ups, but I can differentiate dill from fennel at a hundred paces and I can get my tongue around plant taxonomy. All. Day. Long.

I frequent historic stone sites, not bars. I know a lot about my nervous system and instead of lingerie, now I buy L-theanine. And I dress, according to my daughter, like a “Nineties airport dad”. Repressed, you might think, dried up. But don't worry, now my kink is the forensic details of polar exploration — Ernest Shackleton on a 22ft open lifeboat in the Drake Passage.

life

Ask Professor Tanya Byron

I feel fortunate in life — but grief means I struggle to enjoy it

Q I'm 56 and happily married to a wonderful man. We have two grown-up children who are thriving, close friends and a lovely home, and I am in a career that I still enjoy. I know how fortunate I am and feel grateful for all I have — but I struggle to enjoy it.

Instead I spend my life waiting for something dreadful to happen. If life feels particularly happy, I check myself because I worry that if I get too comfortable, something bad is bound to happen.

No one who knows me would describe me as an anxious person. I sleep reasonably well, I function well at work, I laugh, socialise and people probably think I'm an optimist. But underneath it all is a constant sense that happiness is fragile.

I wonder whether everything changed in my forties. My father was killed in an accident and, eight months later, my mother was diagnosed with cancer and died within three weeks. I don't think I stopped to process either loss. There wasn't time — I sorted out estates, organised funerals and carried on with work and family life because that's what needed to happen. I don't remember falling apart, I just kept going.

Now I wonder whether my mind ever really recovered from those years. Is this delayed grief? Is this an anxiety condition? Or is it possible to learn to enjoy the life I have?
Victoria

A Your letter has resonated deeply with me as I grieve for my own mother, who died last year. I recognise so much of what you describe: the hypervigilance around catastrophe and the fear that something precious is about to be taken away. However, I don't think

your problem is that you worry too much but that your brain has learnt, through devastating experience, that life can change in an instant.

To lose one parent unexpectedly is profoundly destabilising but to lose the other eight months later, and so rapidly after a cancer diagnosis, significantly compounds that loss. As humans we don't do well with uncertainty and bereavement shatters the assumption that the world is reasonably predictable. With that assumption having been overturned twice in quick succession, it is not surprising that your relationship with uncertainty has changed.

When you describe the loss of your parents you say, as many people do, "I just kept going". You were in your forties, working, raising children, building a home, running a busy life that was not able to pause to give you any space to grieve. For you to be carrying on at that profoundly painful time was an extraordinary act of resilience. However, surviving a loss and integrating it psychologically are not the same thing. You were in shock because your father died in an accident and before you had time to process this, never mind grieve for him, your mother died.

Popular culture often talks about delayed grief, as though emotions wait until we have time for them, but the reality is more complicated. The psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's famous five stages — denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance — are often presented as though they are a predictable sequence that bereaved people should move through before emerging at the other side. In fact she developed this model from her work with people who were dying, describing common emotional responses to terminal illness rather than prescribing a universal pathway for bereavement.

Grief is not a task to complete or a series of stages

If you would like Professor Tanya Byron's help, email proftanyabyron@thetimes.co.uk



to work our way through. It is a deeply individual process that ebbs and flows over time, often resurfacing at anniversaries, milestones and also unexpected moments, while gradually becoming woven into the fabric of our lives rather than disappearing. What often persists is not constant sadness but an enduring awareness that life can be heartbreakingly fragile.

Alongside grief, your constant catastrophic worry can be explained by neuroscience. Our brains are constantly trying to anticipate what comes next. This usually serves us well but after losing both your parents so swiftly your brain updated its expectations. It learnt that profound loss can arrive twice before you've even recovered from the first blow, leaving you highly sensitive to uncertainty.

Your constant worry, therefore, might not be an anxiety disorder but simply your brain doing exactly what experience has taught it to do: scanning ahead for the next catastrophe in the hope of protecting you from being caught by surprise.

This problem then becomes compounded because a brain that becomes exceptionally good at anticipating danger often becomes correspondingly poor at recognising safety. This is illustrated by you asking whether it is possible for you to learn to enjoy the life you have, which highlights how even joyful occasions can become tinged with apprehension because happiness has become associated with the possibility of unexpectedly losing it.

Trying to silence those worry predictions or criticising yourself for having them will not work because they represent a survival instinct developed from a time when your world was completely upended. To separate memory from reality,

interrogate the thoughts rather than try to dismiss them: ask yourself whether the prediction is coming from what is happening now or from what happened then. That small question will also give you a moment to pause and ground yourself in the present.

Over time, as you talk back to yourself and de-catastrophise the worry while experiencing the times when your feared catastrophes don't occur, your brain will update its predictions. In this way, you're not trying to convince yourself that bad things never happen (none of us can make that bargain with life) but instead teaching your brain that although they can happen, they are not happening all the time.

You might also notice something your worried brain routinely overlooks: the extraordinary number of ordinary days. A hypervigilant brain discounts these yet they are the experiences that slowly recalibrate our expectations of the world.

If these fears begin to dominate your life, disrupt your sleep, lead you to seek constant reassurance or make you avoid things you once enjoyed, this could be an anxiety condition and you should speak to your GP. Yet from what you've written I suspect this is less about illness than adaptation. Your brain adapted to heartbreaking circumstances and has never caught up with the reality that those circumstances have changed. It might help to engage in some bereavement therapy to let your grief express itself, honouring the past while also enabling it to not contaminate your present.

The deepest irony of grief is that the more we have loved, the more we understand that loss is possible. I believe the answer to that is not to love less or to live cautiously in case happiness is snatched away, but to recognise that uncertainty is the price of attachment. We cannot eliminate that uncertainty but we can refuse to let it steal the ordinary precious moments that make life worth living.

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WithU

Doctors told me I was fine — a brain scan changed everything

For months GPs diagnosed her pain as stress or migraines. Then Charley Ross discovered the awful truth

I am more than 10,000 miles from home when it begins. It's 2am, and my right arm goes numb for a moment and then is overcome with an aggressive pulsing. The feeling spreads, consuming the right-hand side of my body — my neck, my torso and my right leg. Later, I will liken the sensation to heart palpitations during a panic attack, just located somewhere else in the body.

I am doubled over, confused and afraid in my sister Lucy's bed. I'm visiting her in Melbourne as part of a three-week trip travelling around Australia — a break from my life as a 32-year-old journalist for women's magazines.

Lucy wakes up when she hears me crying in pain, comforts me and tells me to go back to sleep. She now regrets being so cavalier, but I also dismissed the episode. I put it down to lack of sleep during the trip, too much alcohol, stress. But nine months later, we will discover the truth.

Weeks later and back in London, I'm on the Overground on my way to meet friends. We're celebrating me moving in with my boyfriend. The end of a seven-year era in my girls-only flatshare, the start of a new one building a home with the man I love.

The palpitations on the right side of my body start again. I don't want to frighten the child sitting next to me, so I stand up and stagger around the carriage as best as I can to keep moving until we pull into my stop. Somehow I get home, and by the time I do, the sensation has gone.

Episodes like these occur more and more over the next six months. I try not to ignore them, booking appointments with the doctors to discuss the odd sensations I'm feeling. One GP (male) says my episode on the Overground was triggered by doing work emails on the platform before boarding, and I need to "avoid multitasking".

After an episode on my 33rd birthday, I'm rushed from Paddington station, rather humiliatingly, via a station buggy, to A&E (not a celebration method I would recommend). They check my chest via ECG and find nothing wrong.

Finally, after yet another episode, I'm seen by two medical students and a female GP at my local practice. Maybe it's because all the studying is



VICKI COUCHMAN FOR THE TIMES

fresh in their minds — or that they're trying to appear diligent in front of the doctor — but they spend a long time asking me questions. They're listening to what I'm telling them and they agree it is unusual. We seem to be getting somewhere.

The GP diagnoses me with hemiplegic migraines, which she says are nothing to worry about. Easily treated. As a further box-tick exercise, she says she'll send me for an MRI but doesn't expect anything to come of it. How glad I am that she did her job properly and ticked all the boxes.

I book the MRI appointment for a week's time, a quick dash in between work assignments. I know something is wrong as soon as I sit up afterwards and the radiographers tell me they've seen "something", but can't tell me what because they're not doctors. I try to relay this vague news to my boyfriend over the phone. The panic soon sets in.

We wait. Another week, another MRI. In the neurosurgeon's office I listen to her tell me I have a brain tumour (a meningioma, for those unfortunately well versed) and will need a craniotomy (a serious form of brain surgery) to remove it.

This involves a group of surgeons temporarily removing a section of

Charley Ross

my skull called the bone flap, to access and operate on my brain. The surgery risks are: stroke, loss of speech, loss of the use of the right side of my body and — the big one — death. Plus, they might have to shave my hair. The horror.

They tell me that they believe the tumour to be benign, but if it's left unchecked, it will grow to a size too large for surgical intervention. Could it kill me? The neurologist looks at me and says simply: the more it grows, the less they can do for me. So now I'm one of the 13,000 people diagnosed with a primary brain tumour in the UK each year.

My boyfriend phones my parents to tell them because I find I cannot speak. Later that day, I accept the first surgery slot they can give me, which is six and a half weeks away.

I remember flashes of the morning of my surgery. A 4.30am wake-up call, feeling jealous of my partner drinking a coffee because I'm nil by mouth. Surpassing the most fear I've ever felt while entering prep for surgery, alone. Joking with the anaesthetists about the fact that I interview celebrities for a living (they didn't believe me, but it's true). I'm also told that no lengthy countdown is needed, and only started happening because TV shows such as

Grey's Anatomy did it. It was three, two, one, nothing.

I wake up with my full mane of curly hair. The surgeons hadn't been sure they could remove the entire tumour, but it is all gone. Although the head surgeon has until now been remarkably emotionally removed, I can sense the joy in her voice. "We took our time," another surgeon tells me. I think more than six hours must have passed, much to the distress of my poor parents and partner who traipsed around east London in the rain waiting for that call.

“**My boyfriend calls my parents to tell them — I cannot speak**

One of the first things I ask for is a coffee, and later an affogato (a bougie but doable request for hospital staff: coffee with a few scoops of ice cream). I'm in a taxi home two days later.

That was six months ago. I wish I could tell you that what has followed has been miraculous and easy. Recovery has been slow, frustrating, humbling, an education. The fatigue remains the most overwhelming symptom — energy drains out of me without warning. I've had days where getting out of bed is a struggle. Days where I feel acutely that I will never be quite the same again.

I think about the doctors who dismissed my complaints and symptoms. I wonder often if the GP and medical students who booked my MRI know that they may have saved my life with their care.

I can't help but feel frustrated, angry and frightened that I had to fight so hard to be taken seriously. Plenty of women say they've experienced some kind of medical misogyny — 93 per cent say they feel dismissed when seeking medical help, according to one recent study. While I'm proud of advocating for myself, I feel beyond concerned at the extent that I had to — and grateful for my parents' and boyfriend's help encouraging me to follow up again with doctors.

Life now consists of significant firsts. Things I will try (and likely fail) to never take for granted again. My first post-op outing as a wedding guest, where we left the reception at 9pm with takeaway pizza so I could have an early night. My first forays back into work, my first day back in the office with my colleagues. The arrival of mine and my partner's first pet together: a dachshund-poodle cross named Sally who has swiftly and proudly taken over my role as the most high-maintenance female in the household.

As for any significant "lasts", I hope to never hear the phrase "bone flap" in a medical appointment ever again.

“**On my 33rd birthday I'm rushed to A&E in a railway station buggy**

first night

proms

Aurora/Collon

Royal Albert Hall, London
★★★★★

By now the Aurora formula is famous. In the first half of a concert this fearless British orchestra presents a dramatised introduction to some (usually epic) masterpiece. Then in the second half it plays the work flawlessly from memory, guided by its founder/conductor, the unflappable Nicholas Collon.

But just because a formula is familiar doesn't mean it's less effective. Here the piece being deconstructed then reconstructed was Mahler's First Symphony, and the result was a gripping and superbly organised Prom.

Of course Mahler connoisseurs will probably already have known about the personal tragedies that lay behind this symphony, and the reasons why the composer infused it with such disparate sounds as army bugle calls, birdsong, children's ditties and cheap dance band music (although, to judge from the gasps around me, it came as news to many that eight of Mahler's thirteen siblings died in childhood). But it was the seamless way in which Mahler's own words were weaved around deftly chosen musical examples that was so impressive about this presentation.

Devised by Jane Mitchell and staged by James Bonas, the dramatic format involved Mahler, ebulliently portrayed by Jack Bardoe, ranting to Sarah Twomey's Sigmund Freud about being unappreciated by dense critics and uncomprehending audiences. Meanwhile Collon and the orchestra interjected telling nuggets of musical analysis, and the fine soprano Natalie Lewis sang extracts from *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, the song cycle that Mahler reworked in the symphony.

All of which ensured that when the full performance happened the audience wasn't just overawed by the orchestra's feat of memorising an hour of complex music but also, I think, listening more closely to the unfolding of the symphony. It was a fine performance too, perhaps a little cautious and restrained in the long first movement but imbued with much more confidence and character after that. Not least of its astonishing aspects was the players' stamina. They stood throughout the two-hour show, then stood through it again at the repeat performance the next morning.

Richard Morrison
Available on BBC Sounds



Will Bozier as Luca and Ashley Shaw as Lana in the revival of Matthew Bourne's sultry production

It's a killer thriller night

Lust, murder and revenge take centre stage in this compelling dance noir, says Debra Craine

dance

The Car Man

Sadler's Wells, London
(120min)
★★★★★

Red-hot desire, cold-blooded murder, betrayal and revenge. Where would film noir be without them? And here they are in overdrive in Matthew Bourne's dance noir, *The Car Man*. He calls his 2000 production a reimagining of Bizet's opera *Carmen*, but the lurid plot is equally inspired by the 1940s Hollywood noir classic *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

That's evident from the moment the curtain rises on the town of Harmony, a tiny Italian-American community on a lonely road to nowhere in the American Midwest. The owner's wife is called Lana, in tribute to Lana Turner, who starred in the 1946 film. When a drifter called Luca wanders into town, their instant mutual desire sets off a deadly chain of events that results in the murder of Lana's brutish husband, Dino, one sultry night.

Lez Brotherston's 1950s-inspired designs cleverly evoke the story's central location, Harmony's garage/diner (the vintage cars are fabulous fun), although the set is adaptable enough to take us to nightclub and jailhouse in the blink of an eye. Terry Davies's pumped score, played by the New Adventures Orchestra jauntily conducted by Benjamin Pope, effectively orchestrates the opera's iconic melodies (the source is Rodion Shchedrin's *Carmen Suite*), which here

sound custom built for dance. Bourne's witty, raunchy, explosive choreography — lots of roughhousing mechanics and their free-spirited girlfriends — has the flavour of *West Side Story* and the dramatic tension of pure theatre. At two hours, the show isn't too long, though we could do without the cabaret act that opens the second half.

Performances were outstanding in both revival casts I saw. As the virile stranger Luca (who, as it turns out, swings both ways) Harrison Dowzell dominated the first night with his charismatic physical presence. As Lana, our Carmen figure, Cordelia Braithwaite was equal parts seductive and scared, while Danny Reubens's Dino lurked menacingly. The second cast was led no less powerfully by Ashley Shaw's dynamic Lana and Will Bozier's provocative, compelling Luca.

In key supporting roles, Leonardo McCorkindale in the first cast gave a poignant performance as Angelo, the poor hired help who is framed for the crime, as did Kurumi Kamayachi as his sweet beloved Rita. The next night Harry Ondrak-Wright and Anna Maria de Freitas were equally touching in the same roles, proving yet again that the 17 dancers of Bourne's New Adventures troupe have the acting chops as well as the dancing ones to make this one killer thriller.

To Aug 29, then touring



when he announced his fellow Melbournean, who joined him for a gorgeous rendition of *Where the Wild Roses Grow*, their murder ballad from 1995. She sang with a dark shimmer and they looked delighted to see each

other, Minogue expressing "unwavering love" for Cave.

The intimations of mortality had been kicked off by the Flaming Lips, who were second on the bill of this one-dayer following Warnduscher, Cate Le Bon and English Teacher. Wayne Coyne, the Lips' frontman, talked about his brother's recent death. The

Oklahoma psychedelic rockers played their anthem *Do You Realize?* with its climactic line "Do you realize that everyone you know someday will die?"

It was sad and glorious, as was Cave's show, which he began by

roaring, "F***ing Brighton!" A couple of songs including Joy felt more indulgent than stirring, but once he and the Bad Seeds got a gallop on they were fearsome. Warren Ellis, Cave's brother-in-music, looked more like Rasputin than ever as he bent devilishly over his fiddle.

The last hour was formidable. Cave drawled and growled his way through the subterranean blues of *Red Right Hand*, the trembling 14-minute *Hollywood* and *Wide Lovely Eyes*, a tribute to Bick ("It's about her, it's about Brighton") that was the closest they got to jaunty. They ended, of course, with an audience singalong to *Into My Arms*, certainly the most romantic song to feature the word "interventionist".

Ed Potton

pop

The Streets

Cardiff Castle
★★★★★

Heavy-duty hedonism was already much in evidence long before the Streets began this lively show. The mood inside Cardiff Castle was boozy, druggy and slightly lairy. Like his core fanbase, Mike Skinner may be nearing 50, but he's still keen to keep the party swinging.

The heart of this concert was a full performance of Skinner's 2004 album, *A Grand Don't Come for Free*, a spoken-word, social realist garage-pop opera involving a mysteriously missing thousand pounds and a stormy, short-lived romance. Its four hit singles have long been fixtures of Streets shows, but this tour marks the first time it has been played in full, in sequence, with a semi-staged production built around the suburban bus stop pictured on the album cover.

While the stylised stage set was certainly impressive, the visual presentation felt undercooked. More theatrical touches might have added much-needed drama to Skinner's monotonous, boorish delivery of sharply observed social vignettes such as *Could Well Be In* and the soaring *Blinded by the Lights*. The singer's hybrid Cockney-Brummie vocal style has always been deadpan, but here he appeared bored and grumpy.

A well-drilled band and strong backing vocalists, particularly the session singer Roo Savill, helped to elevate Skinner's sloppy moments. Shouty, comic crowd-pleasers such as *Fit but You Know It* and *Such a Twat* were reminders that the Streets essentially invented Sleaford Mods a decade early. The uplifting heartbreak ballad *Dry Your Eyes* also retained much of its emotional potency.

Skinner perked up during the show's second act, a more conventional set of Streets classics including the reggae-infused gem *Let's Push Things Forward* and the tender gospel-pop memorial to his late father, *Never Went to Church*. His crowd-surfing finale was also commendable for a man of 47, even if his repeated use of laboured sexual innuendo came across like a drunken pub bore. Skinner is a unique talent, but the cheeky-chappy, everyman-geezer qualities that made him a kind of Britpop Danny Dyer in his twenties are much less charming in middle age.

Stephen Dalton
Touring to Aug 28

pop

Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds

Preston Park, Brighton
★★★★★

The 50,000-strong horde to see Nick Cave in Preston Park in Brighton, many in unseasonal black, reminded you how strange it is that a saturnine Australian singing about death became so huge. It shouldn't be strange, really, given how much death shapes life, Cave's as much as anyone's.

After 20 years in Brighton, he and his wife, the fashion designer Susie Bick, now live in London because the south coast "had just become too sad" after their son Arthur fell to his death in 2015 from a cliff in nearby Ovingdean. This, then, was a homecoming and an emotional one. Cave, 68, often seemed close to tears.

So he did what any sensible person would do and sent for Kylie Minogue (pictured with Cave). There were gasps

This summer Nicky Spence will muster his finest patriotic demeanour and hurl out *Rule, Britannia!* for a TV audience of millions at the Last Night of the Proms. A suitably grand stage, you may think — the packed Royal Albert Hall — for one of Britain's most popular tenors. But when I spoke to him last week his concerns were more down to earth. "Right now I feel like I'm running a Travelodge," he says. "I've been changing duvet covers like it's an Olympic sport."

Perhaps an exaggeration but not by much. Spence, his husband (and sometimes piano partner), Dylan Perez, and their two-year-old son moved last year from Deptford in south London to an old manse in rural Renfrewshire, since when they have become popular hosts for a stream of friends who have, as Spence puts it, "decided to discover this place called Scotland".

For Spence himself it's almost a homecoming. He was born and raised in Dumfries, a few miles south. It wasn't the happiest childhood. His father had disappeared by the time Spence was eight, and he and his mother were of "no fixed abode" for a while. Salvation — and, at 17, a place at the Guildhall School in London — came through the remarkable quality of his teenage voice, recognised by a visiting singing teacher.

Despite those mixed childhood memories he is determined his own son should have a Scottish upbringing. "Why do you think we've moved to Renfrewshire?" he asks. "We want him to go to a nice village school where they encourage country dancing, the reciting of Robert Burns — and probably watching *Trainspotting* as well."

So how does this proud Scot feel about singing *Rule, Britannia!*, a triumphant anthem to 18th-century British naval power that some regard as irredeemably colonial? "Oh, I have no problem identifying as British," he says. Will he be going for the full kilt, sporran and ghillie brogues look? "That would be telling," he says. "Let's just say people may see a bit of leg."

It turns out that the BBC has also issued an embargo on what other numbers Spence will be singing. "We've been brewing ideas for months," he says. "I can only say it will be a nice representation of the normal arias people expect me to sing and then some more left-field items."

What we do know he's performing at the Proms — because it's happening this week — is the title role in Carl Maria von Weber's rarely performed opera *Oberon*, premiered in London in 1826 a few weeks before the composer died. "Yes, at last I get to fulfil the nickname I had at school," he quips. "King of the fairies."

The opera has a reputation for lovely music and a terrible libretto (based on a German poem, not Shakespeare). "I think it helps that we are doing it with a narration [to be spoken by the actress Tamsin Greig]," Spence says. "And we are semi-staging it, as at the Proms last year with Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*. I think it will be a fantastic evening."

With opera companies going through tough times, these semi-staged concerts of operas are taking off, aren't they? "And people are being inventive about how they do



Nicky Spence in Dido and Aeneas at the Proms in 2022

'UK opera has been so minimised'

Nicky Spence will sing at the Last Night of the Proms but he despairs about the lack of ambition for classical music in Britain, he tells **Richard Morrison**

them," Spence says. "But it's not brilliant for the singers. You put in all the work you would do for a run of fully staged performances but only get paid once! And it breaks my heart to see how the UK opera scene has become so minimised. The lack of ambition, and music education, is devastating."

One thing that hasn't been minimised is Spence's own career. He has had his setbacks. He wisely extracted himself from a ridiculously premature recording contract with Decca, awarded when he was 21, because he realised it was boxing him into the crossover repertoire. Instead he went back to college and studied serious roles. But just as his international career was taking off he was hit by a double whammy: the hiatus caused by Covid (which affected everyone, of course), then a horrible accident (he fell down some stairs at an airport) that broke both his legs.

Nicky Spence and Sally Matthews in Peter Grimes last year



"I was actually on my way to make my debut at the Berlin Staatsoper," he says. "The last thing I said as I went into surgery was: 'Tell them I can do it in a wheelchair.' But by the time I had woken up they had replaced me."

A tough life lesson? "Indeed. I thought, why do we give every ounce of our souls to this business when we are so disposable?"

It's fair to say he's not disposable now. "No, I've got so much music going in and out of my brain, I sometimes feel like an NCP car park," he says. From Peter Grimes to Siegmund, he has become the go-to singer for all those anguished tenor roles, with a special penchant for the flawed antiheroes in Janacek's operas.

"All Janacek's characters are either good people doing bad things or bad people doing good things," he says. "And this autumn I'm doing an amazing trilogy of them at the Janacek Festival in Brno. I'm playing Laca in *Jenufa*, probably the

finest opera ever written, then the title role in *The Excursions of Mr Broucek*. And we are also doing Janacek's first opera, *Sarka*, in the original version, which only exists with piano accompaniment. Julius Drake is playing that."

A real rarity? "Yes, and an incredible piece, about a wild tribe of female warriors," he agrees. "Which I admit does sound like the sort of thing people look up late at night on the internet."

Before that he is doing another rarity, much nearer home. At the Edinburgh International Festival he's the soloist in *The Song of Hiawatha*, a sprawling late Victorian choral setting of a Longfellow poem by the English composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. In the 1920s and 1930s it was so popular that it was staged every year at the Royal Albert Hall. Then it fell into neglect until the recent reappraisal of pioneering black composers. "It's a curiosity but overflowing with tunes and good music," Spence says. "And also, incidentally, it has more high notes for the tenor than a Puccini opera."

At 42, Spence is probably entering his prime years. "And I think I look younger than I am," he says. "Mind you, as my mother says, there are no wrinkles on a balloon."

So are there still Everests to climb? Those epic Wagner tenor roles? "I seem to turn down Tristan and Siegfried every year," he says. "People get the idea that because of my enthusiastic nature I should be singing them but I'm not really into things that make you feel that you are trying to complete a Duke of Edinburgh's Award. So that's not on the menu, certainly not for another ten years. I would love to have a go at Captain Vere [*Billy Budd*] and Aschenbach [*Death in Venice*], those anguished Britten roles where you probe the whole meaning of life."

But although his diary is full of engagements in the world's great opera houses, Spence says he is never happier than when in that old manse in Renfrewshire. "Partly that's because I just want to be there for every moment of my beautiful son's life," he says. "And the business I'm in is definitely not family-friendly. Because of all the health and safety stuff it's easier these days to take a class A drug than a child into an opera house. But partly it's because I'm a double Cancerian Pisces — so basically I'm a pool of sensitive water who shouldn't leave home."

And with that baffling self-diagnosis he's off to fold more duvets. **Nicky Spence sings in *Oberon* (Thu) and the Last Night of the Proms (Sep 12) at the Royal Albert Hall, London; and *The Song of Hiawatha* at Usher Hall, Edinburgh (Aug 19)**

Your weekday brain boost

**More
puzzles**
Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai easy

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

		5			6 4			6 4	3		
	9	4			7			7 9	6		4
4		6	9		2				8	7	6
2		7		5				3	7 2		
	8	2	6	7				8 1	5	3 2	
	9	1			6				9 3		8
	8	4 9		6		7 4		9	6		
	7	2							2	8 6	
9 2			1			8 9			8	9 7	

				1	4	5 3	4 9	6 3	4 9	7 3				
	5 6	9					6 9				9		8 6	
	9 4		2		9	2 3				4	8 7 3		3 2	
5			2 9					1			9	5		
	2 8		5	7	4				2	8	5	3		
		8 7			2				3		2		9	
7	5		4						3	2 1			4	
2		7		5	8 6 4 1			4	7 9		4	6	1	

Sakuro

A 3x3 grid with a 2x2 orange center and four white corners. Numbers are in circles: top-left 20, top-right 11, bottom-left 23, bottom-right 17. Below the grid are three circles with numbers 11, 28, and 6.

Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

	3			5
5			3	6
			2	5
	5	3		3
	2	4		
3		5		4

**Solutions in
tomorrow's Times2**

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.

5	20	13	24	16	13	5	12		8	14	17	16	M
19		3		26		19		23		17			14
13	6	19	14	17		24	14	26	8	7	26		5
9		18		17		1		14		3			4
19	18	14	16		16	19	24	13	3	25	26		19
		8		5		6		17					24
8	13	4	24	26	5		16	19	17	7	6		22
24				14		8		6		24			
7	10	17	13	1	13	7	3		14	25	19		6
15		13		19		16		5		14			24
6	19	1	19	17	7	21		12	19	3	3		14
19		13		22		19		7		9			3
				Y									
6	7	6	7		11	17	14	21	2	14	8		20

A B C ~~D~~ E F G H I J K L ~~M~~ N O P Q R S T U V W X Y ~~Z~~

1	2	3	4	5	6 D	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 M	17	18	19	20	21	22 Y	23	24	25	26

Sudoku super fiendish

	4	7	
7	1		9
8	5	2	
2 1	8	5	
6			
	6	1 4	
8 4	6 9	1	
2	1 6		

Killer deadly

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

8	14		20	26	13	10
	24					
	14	22	22	18		
12		22		19	29	
7		10	16			
30						
		10		16		17
7		19				

Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger ($>$) or smaller ($<$) than the number next to it.

5		<		
				v
		<		
v		<	2	>

Thursday's solutions

SAMURAI

9	17	4	8	5	3	2	6	7	4	8	7	4	3	1	9	6	5	2			
8	3	2	1	9	6	5	7	4	8	7	4	3	1	9	6	5	2	7			
5	6	4	7	2	3	8	9	1	7	6	5	4	2	3	8	9	1	7			
3	8	5	9	6	4	2	1	7	6	5	4	2	3	8	9	6	4	2			
4	2	9	3	7	1	6	5	8	7	6	5	4	2	3	8	9	6	4			
1	7	6	5	8	2	9	4	3	1	7	6	5	4	2	3	8	9	6			
6	9	8	7	4	2	1	3	5	7	6	9	8	7	4	2	1	3	5			
7	5	1	6	3	9	4	2	1	5	3	7	6	9	8	7	4	2	1			
2	4	3	5	1	8	7	6	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	3	8	9	6			
						2	1	8	9	3	7	6	5	4	2	3	8	9			
						3	9	4	6	2	5	1	8	7	6	5	4	2			
						6	5	7	4	1	8	2	3	9	6	5	4	2			
6	5	9	3	4	7	8	2	1	5	4	6	9	8	7	3	5	2	4	8	1	6
1	7	2	8	6	5	4	3	8	7	2	1	5	3	8	9	4	7	2	1	5	3
3	4	8	2	9	1	5	7	6	3	9	1	8	4	2	1	7	6	3	9	1	8
5	2	4	7	1	9	6	3	8	7	6	5	4	2	3	1	5	6	8	7	6	5
9	6	7	5	8	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	5	6	8	7	4	3	1	5	6	8
8	1	3	6	2	4	7	5	9	3	6	1	8	9	5	7	2	4	3	1	5	6
2	8	5	1	3	6	4	9	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	6	8	7	6	5	4
7	9	1	4	5	8	3	6	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	6	8	7	6	5	4
4	3	6	9	7	2	1	8	5	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	6	8	7	6	5

SUDOKU

3	4	5	8	2	7	6	9	1
1	6	7	4	5	9	8	2	3
2	8	9	3	1	6	5	7	4
7	3	4	9	8	5	2	1	6
9	1	2	7	6	3	4	8	5
8	5	6	1	4	2	9	3	7
4	9	3	6	7	8	1	5	2
6	2	8	5	3	1	7	4	9
5	7	1	2	9	4	3	6	8

KILLER

4	1	6	8	7	5	3	9	2
5	7	8	3	2	9	4	1	6
2	9	3	4	1	6	5	8	7
9	8	1	2	6	4	7	5	3
6	3	4	7	5	8	1	2	9
7	5	2	1	9	3	8	6	4
1	6	7	5	3	2	9	4	8
8	2	5	9	4	7	6	3	1
3	4	9	6	8	1	2	7	5

SAKURO

2	6	4
17		27
1	8	9
19		29
3	7	5

TRAIN TRACKS

FUTOSHIKI

$$\begin{array}{cccccc}
 \boxed{3} & \boxed{1} & \boxed{5} & \boxed{2} & \boxed{4} & \\
 & & & \wedge & & \\
 \boxed{5} & > & \boxed{4} & > & \boxed{2} & \boxed{3} & \boxed{1} \\
 & & & & & \wedge & \\
 \boxed{1} & \boxed{5} & \boxed{3} & \boxed{4} & > & \boxed{2} & \\
 & \vee & & & & & \\
 \boxed{4} & \boxed{2} & > & \boxed{1} & \boxed{5} & \boxed{3} & \\
 & & & & & & \\
 \boxed{2} & < & \boxed{3} & < & \boxed{4} & \boxed{1} & \boxed{5}
 \end{array}$$

CODEWORD

JOLLITY HYEN
UNN AQQ
SINUS PERFUM
TGPPNNA
ITEMISEDSTU
FRDRCO
YAWNED CHARG
HDBI
KEEN BROCCOL
EWOKV
BUZZING PLEA
AERRUERR

Scowling detective drama still criminally clichéd

Carol Midgley TV review



Van der Valk

ITV1

★★★★☆

Van der Valk is back on ITV1 after three years and the interval hasn't done anything to improve Piet's scowl. If you think he looks frowny around the baddies of Amsterdam, that's nothing compared with the filthy looks he gives his ex-girlfriend. The loathing between them was so electric I thought they were going to have a hate shag right there on the office carpet.

Mind you, I don't blame him for his hostility. His beloved rescue dog, Mandy, never liked Kalie (Kim Riedle) and dogs tend to be very good judges of character. It turned out that Kalie,

also a police officer, was with the dog when she died from an illness and Piet is sad because the last person Mandy saw was someone she didn't trust. He told all this to his present girlfriend, Lena, though if I was Lena I'd have big trust issues too and be keeping a watchful eye on this simmering sexual love-hate tension.

Marc Warren, who continues to look like a cross between Malcolm McDowell and Sting, also continues to be the best thing about *Van der Valk*, though that's not saying much because it is heavy on ropery dialogue and wooden acting.

I exclude Hendrik the pathologist (Darrell D'Silva) from that. He is a great character, a hard-drinking eccentric with a good line in sarcasm, but also, it seems, a worrying illness. It is one of the clichés of TV drama that a character only needs to cough twice and they are usually dying. Hendrick coughed a lot. He was reduced to secretly sending his own blood off to the lab in a phial marked "unknown male". I do hope it's nothing serious. *Van der Valk* badly needs him.

The plot was pretty charmless and so-what, comprising many unpleasant people, safe houses, money laundering, protected witnesses, exploding cars and a murder at the beginning which deployed one of the hoariest TV drama clichés in the book. When the witness who was due to testify against



Marc Warren (and his resting grouchy face) as Piet van der Valk

the powerful crime kingpin Bibi Franken (Anastasia Hille) was strangled by an assassin in the bathroom, we saw water circling the plughole, running empty at the exact moment the victim died. Cringe!

But Warren does suit this role, despite barking tetchily at everyone except the boss's dog and wearing an expression that suggests he is permanently, painfully constipated. His is a pure resting grouchy face but, like all TV detectives, he refused to go to hospital even when he was nearly killed by a car bomb.

I don't know why he is so grumpy when he always seems to have women falling over him. The best dialogue came when he and Kalie had it out in a glass office because he suspects she might have compromised the safe house on purpose and is on the baddies' side. He had told his department access her file.

"If you want another date, just ask me," she said. When Piet indicated that it was the very last thing he wanted, she said: "Not how I remember it, Baby-face." Eww. "I've seen your temper. Not to mention your complete lack of empathy," Piet told her. Hello pot, meet kettle.

Anyway it's clear there is unfinished business between them and I agree with Hendrik: "Get a room." Seriously. A hotel room would be so much less depressing than his houseboat.



Radio choice

Vernon Kay

Radio 2, 9.30am

As his health improves, the re-emergence of Phil Collins, above, into public life continues. He joins Vernon Kay for a special edition of *Tracks of My Years*, choosing ten songs that have provided a soundtrack to his life, including tunes by the Who, Stevie Wonder, the Travelling Wilburys and Taylor Swift. Collins also discusses his childhood as a teenage drummer before joining Genesis in 1970 and his solo career, and reveals how he made his hit *In the Air Tonight*. Meanwhile, *Rock and Roll Confessions* is a new podcast from the former Clash drummer Terry Chimes, with guests including Gaye Advert and Marco Pirroni. **Clair Woodward**

Times Radio

Digital, web, smart speaker, app

5.00am Tom Nunan **6.00** Kate McCann and Stig Abell **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** Sebastian Payne **2.00** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover **4.00** John Pienaar with Drive **7.00** Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2

FM: 88-90.2 MHz

6.30am Sara Cox **9.30** Choice Vernon Kay. Phil Collins reveals his *Tracks of My Years* **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spooky **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Jo Whaley **9.00** The Blues Show with Cerys Matthews **10.00** The Good Groove with Melvin Odom **12.00** Connor Phillips **3.00am** Dance Sounds of the 90s (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3

FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.00pm** Classical Live BBC SO in Sibelius's *Symphony No 2* and Britten's *Cello Symphony* from the Proms. BBC Proms – Sibelius (*Symphony No 2* in D). International Sacred Music Festival, Fribourg – Bach (*Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*, BWV 106, cantata). Ryedale Festival – Dvořák (*Piano Quintet No 2*, Op 81). International Sacred Music Festival, Fribourg – Vivaldi (*Concerto for Strings in D minor*, RV 127); and BBC Proms – Britten (*Cello Symphony*) **4.00** Composer of the Week: Mozart (1756-1791) Kate Molleson tells Mozart's story through five relationships that shaped him, beginning with the one he had with his father Leopold

5.00 In Tune

With music by Alexandra Dariescu **7.00** Live BBC Proms 2026 Tom Service presents live from the Royal Albert Hall as Thomas Søndergård conducts the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, with pianist Kirill Gerstein. Knussen (*Flourish with Fireworks*); Rachmaninov (*Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*); and Shostakovich (*Symphony No 11 in G minor, The Year 1905*) **10.00** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30am** Through the Night (r)

Radio 4

FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz

5.00am News Summary **5.04** Last Word (r) **5.34** Shipping Forecast **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **6.00** Today **9.00** Across the Red Line Anne McElvoy chairs a discussion on falling birth rates (2/3) **9.30** How Did We Get Here?: No World Order Tristan Redman examines how China reshaped its relationship with the international system (2/6) **10.00** Woman's Hour Kylie Pentelow presents **11.00** Behind the Crime The story of a man who spent years in an Ecuadorian prison for drug trafficking (1/3) **11.45** Tony Hawks Is Giving Nothing Away The comedian explores issues surrounding inheritance (1/5) (r) **12.04pm** You and Yours **1.00** The World at One **1.45** The Bare Necessities Dan Richards meets the people gathering life skills to survive in troubled times (1/5)

2.00 The Archers (r)

2.15 Alone

By Moray Hunter (4/6) (r)

2.45 NatureBang

Discussing if giving rights to rivers and forests changes how people think about the world (2/5)

3.00 A Good Read

With education activist Vee Kativhu and actor Susie Riddell (9/9)

3.30 You're Dead to Me

Underwear in the West (6/13) (r)

4.00 Britain's Robot Army

Exploring how modern technology shapes modern warfare (r)

4.30 The Kitchen Cabinet

Jay Rayner presents the culinary panel show (5/6) (r)

5.00 PM

6.00 Six O'Clock News

6.30 Just a Minute

With panellists Paul Merton, Zoe Lyons, Catherine Bohart and Paterson Joseph (3/6)

7.00 The Archers

Neil finds himself run ragged

7.15 Front Row

8.00 The Briefing Room

Government policy on legal migration, overseas workers and leave to remain (5) (r)

8.30 BBC Inside Science

The true limitations of alien life (r)

9.00 Across the Red Line

Falling birth rates (2/3) (r)

9.30 How Did We Get Here?: No World Order (2/6)

10.00 The World Tonight

10.45 Book at Bedtime:

The Vicar of Wakefield

By Oliver Goldsmith (1/10)

11.00 Intimacy

Liza builds trust with the cast, but tensions with Gary deepen (2/4)

11.30 Hollywood

and the Adland Five

The impact of five British directors on movie history (1/4) (r)

12.00 News and Weather

12.30am Tony Hawks Is

Giving Nothing Away (1/5) (r)

12.48 Shipping Forecast

1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra

Digital only

8.00am Dr Phil's Bedside Manner **8.30** Following Pappano **8.45** Small Island **9.00** Just a Minute **9.30** Behind the Taverna **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Screenshot **10.45** Witness History **11.00** Raffles **11.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? **12.00** Control Group Six **12.30pm** Dad's Army **1.00** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner **1.30** Following Pappano **1.45** Small Island **2.00** Wordaholics **2.30** A Whole 'Nother Story **3.00** When Marnie Was There **4.00** Screenshot **4.45** Witness History **5.00** Raffles **5.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? **6.00** Control Group Six **6.30** Dad's Army **7.00** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner **7.30** Following Pappano **7.45** Small Island **8.00** Wordaholics **8.30** A Whole 'Nother Story **9.00** When Marnie Was There **10.00** Comedy Club: Just a Minute **10.30** Listen Against **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview **11.00** Current-ish **11.30** The In Crowd

Radio 5 Live

MW: 693, 909

5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Marianna Spring **2.00pm** Matt Chorley **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** The Monday Night Club **9.00** Live Cricket **10.00** Sarah Mulkerins **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT

MW: 1053, 1089 kHz

5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Breakfast with Jeff Stelling

10.00 Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** talkSPORT Drive **7.00** Kick Off **10.00** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Paul Ross

Talk

Digital only

6.00am Jeremy Kyle **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** Ian Collins **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music

Digital only

5.00am Emily Pilbeam **7.00** Nick Grimshaw **10.00** Lauren Laverne **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Steve Lamacq's Teatime Session **7.00** New Music Fix Daily **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** Artist in Residence: Ezra Collective **12.00** Oasis at the BBC **1.00am** Oasis Live at Knebworth **2.00** Oasis: What's the Story? **4.00** The Oasis Playlist

Virgin Radio

Digital only

6.30am Steve Denyer on The Chris Evans Breakfast Show with Moneybox **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Geoff Lloyd **10.00** Jen Thomas **2.00am** Stu Elmore

Classic FM

FM: 100-102 MHz

6.30am Breakfast with Dan Walker **9.00** The Hall of Fame Hour with Dan Walker **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings with Zeb Soanes (r) **9.00** Classic FM's Composer Carousel with Zeb Soanes **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace
ITV1, 9pm

This series, spun off from *Long Lost Family*, seeks to connect foundlings with members of their birth family. Ideally that is the mothers who abandoned them, albeit usually in places where they expected the babies to be found. That was the case with Sarah — whose story is one of two told in Nicky Campbell

and Davina McCall's show tonight — as she was left in a phone box in Leicester in 1983 and found by someone making a call. Ariel Bruce's research team identify the birth mother, as they do in a story centred on David, who was left in a London apartment block in 1960. A quest that also takes in Paris homes in on the Netherlands and a now-dead woman called Petra — an apt outcome, as *Long Lost Family's* own birth parent was a now axed Dutch show, *Spoorloos* (without trace).
John Dugdale



Davina McCall with Sarah, Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace

Celebrity Hunted
Channel 4, 9pm

Famous and not so famous faces race for Stand Up to Cancer from the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich with the hunters in hot pursuit. Will Brian Conley and his daughter Lucy, the *Strictly* dancers Amy Dowden and Carlos Gu, the presenters Sophie Morgan and JJ Chalmers, the comedians Jen Brister and Laura Smyth, the Love Islanders Chris Taylor and Toby Aromolaran and the property-

flipping siblings Scarlett and Stuart Douglas remain at liberty for long?
Helen Stewart

Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith
Channel 4, 4pm

When Penelope Keith died, aged 86, at the end of June, the BBC had her 1970s sitcom hits, *The Good Life* and *To the Manor Born*, available to rerun. Channel 4, by contrast, is able to repeat this series from January, having earlier

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Animal Park (r) (AD)
10.15 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back (r)
10.45 Expert Witness (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt. From Newark
1.00 BBC News at One; Weather
1.35 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.45 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing. JJ Chalmers tries to double the charm of two rattan chairs
2.45 Escape to the Country. A couple relocate to Somerset or Devon (r)
3.45 The Bidding Room. Train buffs keep track of their great-uncle's treasure, and a man in livery weighs up the bids
4.30 The Answer Run. New series. Jason Manford hosts the quiz in which couples face a series of 50/50 questions which hurdle down the Answer Run towards them
5.15 Pointless. Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

BBC2

6.30am Bargain Hunt (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: The Repair Shop. A football from the Scottish Cup final replay (r) (AD, SL)
9.00 BBC News
1.00pm Richard Osman's House of Games. With Sean Fletcher and Louise Minchin (r)
1.30 The Finish Line. Quiz hosted by Roman Kemp and Sarah Greene (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? Quiz (r)
2.45 The Hairy Bikers' Bakeathon. Si King and Dave Myers go baking in Italy (r) (AD)
3.45 The Farmers' Country Showdown. Visiting Staffordshire County Show (r)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow. From the Mansion House in London (r)
5.15 Flog It! The team visits Manchester (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games. Gethin Jones, Tiff Stevenson, Kate Thornton and Gary Wilmot take part (r)
6.30 Richard Osman's House of Games. With Gethin Jones, Tiff Stevenson, Kate Thornton and Gary Wilmot (r)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning. A mix of celebrity chat, lifestyle features, advice and competitions
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and his dealers land at Aerospace Bristol and they set up the den beneath the wings of Concorde (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts the game show as a contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Bradley Walsh hosts as contestants from Wigan, Ross-on-Wye, Liverpool and Stevenage work together as a team to take down one of the Chasers (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (r)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. Henry Cole and Simon O'Brien visit Oxford, where they discover a servant's call bell (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. A majestic detached house in Greater Manchester (r)
2.10 Countdown. With Ade Adepitan
3.00 A Place in the Sun. Ben Hillman helps a pair from Leicester find a holiday home in Lucca, Italy for their budget of £90,000 (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith. The work that goes into maintaining stately homes. *See picks of the day* (r) (AD)
5.00 Château DIY. At Château du Puits Es Pratz, a 180-year-old wine barrel is converted into a quirky dining space (r) (AD)
6.00 American Pickers. An incredible North Carolina collection of weird and wonderful circus and sideshow memorabilia (r) (AD)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright
2.20 FILM: A Reservation for Death (PG, TVM, 2021) A travel writer witnesses a murder in Malta and becomes ensnared in a web of intrigue and espionage. Mystery with Nathalie Kelley and Colin Donnell
4.00 Castle. Beckett attends the scene of the murder of a pre-school admissions director, and is shocked when Castle turns up brandishing his new credentials as a licensed private investigator (r)
4.55 Love Nature. Cameras focus on a flock of red kites, and their nightly routine (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Majorca: A Year in the Sun. Exploring Majorca's culture, from the Fisherman's Fiesta in Port d'Andratx to the creation of a mural in Petra honouring local women (r)
6.55 5 News Update

7.00 **The One Show** Presented by Alex Jones and Roman Kemp

7.30 **EastEnders** Peter's suspicions about Lauren grow, Barney confesses, and a revelation leaves Ross furious and determined to go to the police (AD)

8.00 **Britain's Strictest Schools — Panorama** Current affairs report

8.30 **Scam Interceptors** A man is trapped into believing he will be arrested if he does not transfer money (r)

9.00 **The Rapture** Gabs finally meets Anika Drake. New nurse Siobhan raises suspicions at Oxsmith. When Bethany is found injured, Gabs and Rafiq plan her escape. Max pushes Caroline to back Rostyre (4/5) (AD)

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather
10.45 **FILM: The Mist (15, 2007)** A small town is cloaked in a deep mysterious cloud of mist, and anyone who ventures into its depths is attacked by vicious monsters. A group of survivors seeks shelter in a supermarket, but internal conflicts soon drive them apart as two factions form with very different ideas of how to survive the crisis. Sci-fi horror based on a Stephen King novella with Thomas Jane, Marcia Gay Harden and Toby Jones (AD)

7.00 **Global Eye** Nawal al Maghafi speaks to Iranians about the war

7.30 **Mastermind** Specialist subjects include British birds of prey, Roger Moore's James Bond, King Charles I and Sylvia Plath

8.00 **Only Connect** Victoria Coren Mitchell presents the quiz show

8.30 **University Challenge** Guildhall School of Music and Drama take on Darwin College, Cambridge

9.00 **Evolution** Chris Packham dives into one of the biggest questions in nature, considering how intelligence itself evolved and how it arose in the extraordinary mind of the dolphin. Inside each one lies the result of a journey, from light-sensing cells to conscious thought (4/5) (AD)

10.00 **Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing** Bob and Paul head to the Norfolk Broads (4/6) (r) (AD)

10.30 **Newsnight** With Victoria Derbyshire

11.05 **FILM: Sing Sing (15, 2023)** A man imprisoned for a crime he did not commit finds new purpose in staging an original play. Prison drama starring Colman Domingo and Sean San Jose. *See film choice*

12.45am **Sign Zone: Countryfile** The final stop on Anita Rani's east coast road trip is Orford Ness on the Suffolk coast (r) (SL)
1.40-2.25 Bergerac. A threatening letter corroborates Bergerac's hunch that they have the wrong people in custody. Drama starring Damien Molony (r) (AD, SL)

7.30 **Fletchers' Family Farm** A pregnant cow gives birth, but the process is not straightforward (8/10) (r) (AD)

8.00 **Emmerdale** Cain has an important conversation with Kyle, and news regarding Monty is not good (AD)

8.30 **Coronation Street** Cassie says an emotional farewell to her family (AD)

9.00 **Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace** New series. Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell investigate the cases of foundlings from 1983 and 1960. *See picks of the day* (AD)

10.00 **ITV News at Ten; Weather;** followed by Regional News

10.45 **Cold Case Forensics: The Death of God's Banker** A look at the death of Italian banker Roberto Calvi, whose body was found hanging under Blackfriars Bridge with the investigation leading to a murky world of finances (1/3) (r) (AD)

11.45 **Love & Death** Allan grows concerned when his repeated calls to Betty go unanswered (4/7) (r) (AD)

12.45am **Shop on TV 3.00** The Staircase. In the months preceding Kathleen's death, Michael leads a double life, as the Petersons struggle financially (r) (AD, SL)
4.05 Unwind with **ITV 5.05-6.00** Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and his dealers land at Aerospace Bristol (r) (AD, SL)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 **Dover 24/7: Britain's Busiest Port** Border Force officers are on the hunt for illegal meat being smuggled into Britain, police officers are on a stake-out, and the engineers face their biggest job of the year (AD)

9.00 **Celebrity Hunted** New series. With Brian and Lucy Conley, Amy Dowden, Carlos Gu, JJ Chalmers, Sophie Morgan, Jen Brister, Laura Smyth, Chris Taylor, Toby Aromolaran, and Scarlett and Stuart Douglas. *See picks of the day* (AD)

10.00 **Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives** The family host bonfire night for the estate in memory of their dad Sid. Trewley gets an unexpected lesson in tough love from her mum (AD)

11.05 **Surgery Secrets of the Super Rich** A businesswoman marks her 60th birthday with an endoscopic facelift. A fitness guru has electromagnetic body sculpting and a model undergoes a laser procedure to tighten her jawline (3/6) (r) (AD)

12.05am **Secrets of the Celebrity Sex Tapes** A hacking scandal changes the way society thinks of consent (AD)
12.55 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. In Arizona (r) (SL)
1.45 Don't Date Brandon (r) (AD, SL)
4.30 Hollyoaks Omnibus (r) (AD, SL)
5.40 Sunday Brunch (r)
5.50-6.30 Countdown (r)

7.00 **Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders** Officers pull over the driver of a suspected cloned car and he claims he has just swapped the registrations between his two vehicles because one does not have insurance (4/10) (r)
7.55 5 News Update

8.00 **Street Cops: Catching the Yobs** Police pursue a suspected stolen SUV being driven recklessly through the suburbs of Corby, and two Northampton PCs are called to deal with a loud aggressive drunk

9.00 **Fare Dodgers: At War with the Law** New series. Behind the scenes with revenue protection teams at some of the UK's biggest rail, bus and tram operators. A Transport for London investigator pursues a suspected fare evader owing the network almost £2,000 in unpaid fares

10.00 **Police Interceptors: Taking Down the Shoplifting Gangs** Officers tackle thieves terrorising supermarkets and shops with armed units scrambled to hunt for a violent shoplifter who stabbed a security guard (r)

11.05 **Traffic Cops** Officers clamp down on repeat offenders in North Yorkshire, arresting a woman in Selby with a history of drink-driving who claims a relative was at the wheel after she smashed into two parked cars on her way back from a drinking session (r)

12.05am **Car Pound Cops** A quad-bike rider in Surrey (r)
1.00 Cruise TV with LovettBookit (r)
2.00 GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r)
2.50 Castle (r)
3.40 Friends (r)
4.35 The Highland Vet (r) (SL)
5.25 Entertainment News on 5
5.35 Milo (r) (SL)
5.45-6.00 The Adventures of Paddington (r) (SL)

launched her sideline as a presenter with *Penelope Keith's Hidden Villages* (2014-16). She provides the voiceover and links but doesn't visit the series' nine recurring stately homes, which share a need to pay for upkeep bills. First up are mansions in the Cotswolds, in Co Durham and near Rugby, whose owners respectively hope that opening a café and sauna, using family members to do everything, and exploiting a Gunpowder Plot connection will do the trick. **JD**

Sally Magnusson Remembers: Mastermind BBC4, 9pm

The broadcaster and writer Sally Magnusson is being asked not to reminisce about her own long TV career presenting *Songs of Praise* but that of her father, Magnus. From 1972 to 1997 he was the BBC's quiz master on *Mastermind*, coining the catchphrase "I've started, so I'll finish." Not as much fun having it shouted at her on the way to school, his daughter confirms. **HS**

STREAMING CHOICE

Futurama Disney+

Thanks to the inclusion of such visually playful episodes as *The Numberland Gap* (in which the team entered a parallel universe populated entirely by numbers), series 13 of Matt Groening's surreal space sitcom was the strongest since the show's 2023 revival. Series 14, which launches today, promises to maintain that high standard with

sustained riffs on space pirates, lab-grown meat and the nightmare of American healthcare plus the grand return of the great Lord Nibbler and an episode dedicated to, erm, the cancellation of *Futurama*.

Andrew Male

PICKS OF THE DAY

Sing Sing (15, 2024) BBC2, 11.05pm

Colman Domingo was Oscar-nominated for his part in Greg

Kwedar's powerful drama about a theatre group at New York's high-security prison, which once forbade its inmates even to speak. Domingo plays John "Divine G" Whitfield, a founding member of the group who is a published writer on the outside, incarcerated for a crime he didn't commit. The film casts many real-life inmates alongside the actors to forge authenticity. If you find it hard to tell who are the violent offenders and who are the actors, the film is working its magic. (106min) **Kevin Maher**

BBC4

7.00pm Atlantic: The Wildest Ocean on Earth. Life in the warm waters of the tropical Atlantic (AD)
8.00 The Art of Spain. Exploring the history of Spanish art (AD)
9.00 Sally Magnusson Remembers – Mastermind. The broadcaster shares memories of her father's time as the host of *Mastermind*. See picks of the day
9.15 Mastermind 1972 Final. Magnus Magnusson presents
9.45 Call My Bluff
10.15 Becoming Frida Kahlo. Dangerous politics and turbulent love shock the painter's world. Last in the series (AD)
11.15 Turner: The Man Who Painted Britain. Chronicling the painter's life
12.15am Atlantic: The Wildest Ocean on Earth (AD) **1.15** Becoming Frida Kahlo (AD) **2.15am-3.15** The Art of Spain (AD, SL)

Sky Arts

6.00am LSO: Rattle Conducts Brahms and Shostakovich **8.00** The Joy of Painting **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering (AD) **12.00** Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour (b/w) **3.00** The Seventies (AD) **4.00** Discovering (AD) **5.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2021 (AD) **6.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **7.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.00** André Rieu: Happy Days Are Here Again. From Maastricht **11.00** Brian and Roger Eno Live at the Acropolis **12.40am** Up Late with Nicola Benedetti **2.15** Peter and the Wolf **3.45** Opera North's Resonance **4.00** The Book Club Summer Reads Special **5.00am-6.00** Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien

More4

8.55am Heir Hunters **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me (AD) **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.50** Car SOS. A neglected 1988 Fiat Uno Turbo (AD) **6.50** Car SOS. Taking on a 1993 Toyota Supra Mk4 (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. A house built out of shipping containers on a farm in Co Derry (4/10) (AD) **9.00** Bill Bailey's Vietnam. Bill uncovers the importance of ancient stories in Vietnamese culture. Last in the series (AD) **10.00** 24 Hours in A&E. A woman involved in a motorbike accident is brought to St George's Hospital in London (1/8) (AD) **11.00** 24 Hours in A&E. The medics treat sport enthusiasts involved in accidents on two wheels (2/8) (AD) **12.05am** 999: On the Front Line (AD) **1.05** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.15am-3.45** A Place in the Sun



The West Indies bowler Kemar Roach

Live sport today

Live Test Cricket: West Indies v Pakistan TNT Sports 2, 2.30pm-11
Coverage of the second day of the second and final Test in the series from Queen's Park Oval

Live The Hundred: Welsh Fire Women v Southern Brave Women Sky Sports Cricket, 2.45pm-6, Sky Sports Main Event, 3pm-6 (Start-time 3.00). Coverage from Sophia Gardens, Cardiff

Live Tennis Sky Sports +, Sky Sports Tennis, 4pm-12midnight
Coverage from day two of the Canadian Open

Live The Hundred: Welsh Fire Men v Southern Brave Men Sky Sports Cricket, 6pm-9.30 (Start-time 6.30). Coverage of the match comes from Sophia Gardens, Cardiff

Live SPFL: Celtic v Dundee Sky Sports Main Event, Sky Sports Football, 6.30pm-10.15 (Kick-off 7.30). Coverage of the Scottish Premiership match from Celtic Park

Talking Pictures

6.00am The Vise (b/w) **6.35** FILM: *Tomorrow at Ten* (PG, 1964) (b/w) **8.15** Dial 999 (b/w) **8.45** FILM: *Paratrooper* (PG, 1953) **10.30** Z Cars **11.30** FILM: *Crow Hollow* (PG, 1951) (b/w) **12.50pm** What's on TPTV with Noel **1.00** Richard the Lionheart (b/w) **1.35** FILM: *The Green Man* (PG, 1956) (b/w) **3.10** FILM: *Confession* (PG, 1955) (b/w) **5.00** Cinebox Memories **5.05** FILM: *Doctor in the House* (PG, 1954) **6.55** Cycling Proficiency **7.00** The Footage Detectives **8.00** Maigret. In French **9.50** FILM: *The Saint – The Fiction Makers* (U, 1968) Adventure **11.55** FILM: *Murders in Hossegor* (15, TVM, 2017) Crime drama **1.55am** FILM: *Poldark* (PG, TVM, 1996) Historical drama **4.05** Men Against the Sea **4.25** The Veil (b/w) **5.00am-6.00** Railway Murders

Film4

11.00am Paw Patrol: The Movie (U, 2021) Animated adventure with the voice of Tyler Perry **12.40pm** Prince Valiant (U, 1954) Adventure with Robert Wagner **2.45** Mr Hobbs Takes a Vacation (U, 1962) Comedy with James Stewart and Maureen O'Hara **5.00** 10 Things I Hate About You (12, 1999) Comedy with Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles (AD) **6.50** The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (12, 2003) Comic-book fantasy adventure with Sean Connery and Shane West (AD) **9.00** Twister (PG, 1996) A storm-chaser maps the path of a large tornado. Action thriller starring Helen Hunt and Bill Paxton **11.15** Beast (15, 2022) Action thriller starring Idris Elba (AD) **1.05am-3.15** Monster Hunter (12, 2020) Fantasy adventure starring Milla Jovovich and Tony Jaa (AD)

BBC3

7.00pm The Catch Up
7.05 Deadly 60. In British Columbia **7.30** Deadly 60. Visiting Costa Rica **8.00** The Great British Sewing Bee. The contestants recycle T-shirts and make outfits with an eco-message. Hosted by Sophie Willan (AD) **9.00** Top Gear Patagonia Special. Part one of two. A gruelling trip to the world's southernmost city **10.05** Top Gear Patagonia Special. The conclusion of the trip to the world's southernmost city **11.10** Icons of Football. Following goalkeeper Craig Gordon as he attempts to reach the World Cup **12.10am** Tommy: The Good. The Bad. The Fury. Five editions of the documentary following boxer Tommy Fury's return to the ring (AD) **2.40** A Better Place **2.55am-3.55** BBC New Comedy Awards 2024

ITV2

6.00am Backyard Builds (SL) **6.30** Dress to Impress (AD, SL) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City **8.20** The Real Housewives of Orange County **9.20** The Only Way Is Essex **10.15** Dawson's Creek **11.15** Charmed **12.10pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.10** Supermarket Sweep **2.10** The Floor USA (AD) **3.10** The Only Way Is Essex **4.10** The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City. Tensions linger **5.00** The Real Housewives of Orange County **6.00** Celebrity Catchphrase (AD) **7.00** The Floor USA (AD) **8.00** The 1% Club (AD) **9.00** The Only Way Is Essex **10.00** Family Guy (AD) **11.35** American Dad! (AD) **12.35am** Bob's Burgers (AD) **1.30** Plebs (AD, SL) **1.55am-2.25** Deep Fake Neighbour Wars (SL)

ITV3

6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **7.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.30** Heartbeat (AD) **1.35pm** Midsomer Murders (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **4.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat. Nostalgic drama (AD) **8.00** Midsomer Murders. A woman is killed in a churchyard two years after the death of her husband (AD) **10.00** Grantchester. A computer laboratory head keels over and dies from mercury poisoning (3/6) (AD) **11.00** Grantchester. Will and Georgie investigate a woman's fatal injuries in a fall (4/6) (AD) **11.50** Trial & Retribution. Part one of two. The detectives investigate the murder of a schoolgirl (3/10) **1.25am-2.25** Wycliffe

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
10.45pm Bikes! Armoyn Road Races **11.25** FILM: The Mist (2007) **1.20am-6.00** BBC News

BBC1 Scotland
10.45pm SportsScene: Premiership Highlights **11.15** FILM: The Mist (2007) **1.10am** Scotcast (r) **1.40** Weather for the Week Ahead **1.45am-6.00** BBC News

BBC1 Wales
8.30pm-9.00 Best of Weatherman Walking. Three well-known castles

BBC2 N Ireland
10.00pm-10.30pm Kayak ó Thuaidh. Tackling the Inishowen peninsula (r)

STV
12.45am-3.00 Shop on TV **4.05am-6.00** Night Vision

BBC Scotland

2.00pm Sign Zone: This Farming Life (r) **3.00** Sign Zone: Beechgrove Garden (r) **3.30-4.30** Sign Zone: Paramedics on Scene (r) **7.00** Reporting Scotland: News at Seven **7.30** The Great Food Guys (r) **8.00** The Mountain (r) **9.00** Interior Design Masters with Alan Carr (r) **10.00** River City **10.30** Two Doors Down (r) **11.00** Scotcast **11.30pm-12.00** Gary: Tank Commander (r)

S4C

6.00am Cyw **9.30** Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **12.00** News **12.05pm** Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **2.00** News **2.05** Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **6.00** Am Drol (r) **6.59** News **7.00** Heno **7.30** News; Weather **8.00** Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 **10.05** Y Babell **10.35** Radio+ **11.05pm-12.10am** Y Sioe 2026 (r)

PBS America

8.00am America the Bountiful **8.50** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **9.50** Pirates: Behind the Legends **10.50** The Anti-Soviet Fighters **12.00** Hitler's Gold **1.00pm** America the Bountiful **1.35** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **2.35** Hitler's Gold **3.40** Pirates: Behind the Legends **4.40** The Anti-Soviet Fighters **5.50** Hitler's Gold. A covert financial web **6.55** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall. Columbus' return voyage **7.55** Pirates: Behind the Legends. The story of William Kidd, a pirate hunter who turned pirate himself **8.55** The Anti-Soviet Fighters. Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian resistance against the Soviet Union **10.00** Hitler's Gold. The financial backing Hitler needed **11.00** Pirates: Behind the Legends **12.00** The Anti-Soviet Fighters **1.10am-2.00** America the Bountiful

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) **AD** **10.15** Task (r) (AD) **12.30pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **2.30** Billions (r) (AD) **4.40** Task. Crime drama (r) (AD) **6.50** True Detective: Night Country. Danvers and Navarro confirm the location of Annie's murder (r) (AD) **7.55** True Detective: Night Country. Prior digs into the links between Tsalal and Silver Sky (5/6) (r) (AD) **9.00** House of the Dragon. Game of Thrones prequel with Matt Smith **10.15** The Last of Us. Joel and Ellie near the end of their journey. Stars Pedro Pascal (9/9) (r) (AD) **11.20** Dune: Prophecy. Desmond makes a confession to Emperor Corrinno, and Tula reluctantly enlists Lila for a vital mission (r) (AD) **12.30am** Task. Crime drama (r) (AD) **2.50** Billions (r) (AD) **5.05am-6.00** The Guest Wing (r) (AD)

Sky Docs

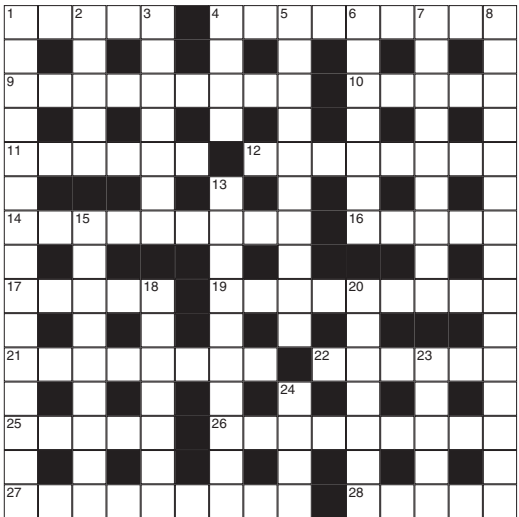
6.00am The 2000s (r) **7.00** Discovering: Ed Harris (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **9.00** 100 Foot Wave (r) (AD) **10.00** The Comedy Store (r) (AD) **11.05** UFO (r) (AD) **12.00** FILM: *Steve McQueen – The Lost Movie* (12, 2021) An unfinished movie starring Steve McQueen (AD) **1.50pm** My Icon: Leon Pryce (r) (AD) **2.00** The United Way (r) (AD) **3.50** My Icon: Chris Hughton (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Ed Harris (r) (AD) **5.55** JFK: Destiny Betrayed (r) **7.00** David Frost Vs (5/6) (r) (AD) **8.00** The Cult of the Family (r) **11.20** Costa Concordia: Chronicle of a Disaster (r) **1.20am** The Great Horsemeat Scandal (r) (AD) **2.00** The Salisbury Poisonings: A Spy Next Door **3.40** Nick Cave's Veiled World (r) **5.00am-6.00** Discovering: Ed Harris (r) (AD)

U&Yesterday

6.10am Abandoned Engineering (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **10.00** Secret Nazi Bases **11.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **4.00** Secret Nazi Bases **5.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** The Green Planet (AD) **8.00** Canal Boat Diaries (1/5) **8.30** Canal Boat Diaries (2/5) **9.00** Portillo's Empire Journey. South Africa's racial unrest (3/4) **10.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics. A Harley Davidson (AD) **11.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics. A 1991 Nissan Figaro (AD) **12.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **2.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **3.00am-6.10** Teleshopping

MindGames

General Knowledge Crossword No 349



- Across
- 1 Geometric figure resembling a ring doughnut (5)
 - 4 English seaside resort with a celebrated "Golden Mile" (9)
 - 9 Item of knitwear topped with a pompom (6,3)
 - 10 Royal golf course on the west coast of Scotland that last hosted the Open in 2024 (5)
 - 11 Body of sacred texts in various south Asian faiths (6)
 - 12 Padded sides of a snooker or billiard table (8)
 - 14 Brand of artificial surfacing for sports pitches and lawns (9)
 - 16 Roman encyclopaedist or his letter-writing nephew (5)
 - 17 Plants such as ground elder and couch grass (5)
 - 19 Jean ---, 1960s British fashion model (9)
 - 21 The ---, TV reality game show with Claudia Winkleman (8)

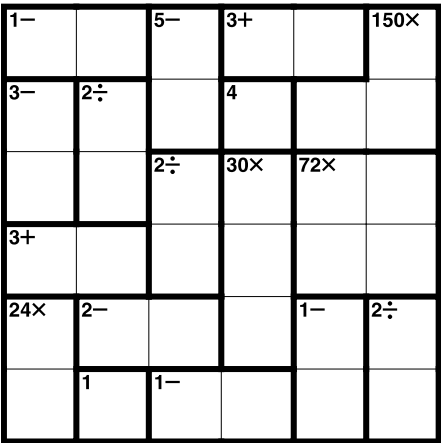
- 22 Tragic princess in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (6)
- 25 Enclosure for a pet rabbit (5)
- 26 Sweet white Bordeaux wine (9)
- 27 1992 Robert Altman satire starring Tim Robbins as a Hollywood executive (3,6)
- 28 Fish or amphibian eggs (5)

- Down
- 1 Mother of Moppet, Mittens and Tom Kitten in Beatrix Potter's tales (7,8)
 - 2 Garden bird formerly also known as a ruddock (5)
 - 3 Italian port once home to a medieval medical school (7)
 - 4 Pioneering Danish theoretical physicist (1885-1962) (4)
 - 5 British tennis player who reached the 2026 Wimbledon semi-finals as a wild card (6,4)
 - 6 Condiment made with sugar, vinegar and tomatoes (7)
 - 7 Medical expert on the ear (9)
 - 8 Acclaimed British director of *If...* and *This Sporting Life* (7,8)
 - 13 Russian composer of the opera *Boris Godunov* (10)
 - 15 Kafka novel about a man thwarted by bureaucracy (3,6)
 - 18 Traditional schoolbag (7)
 - 20 Ska-inspired band fronted by Suggs (7)
 - 23 Pacific nation named the Friendly Islands by Cook (5)
 - 24 Regional pronunciation that emphasises the "r" sound (4)

Last week's solution

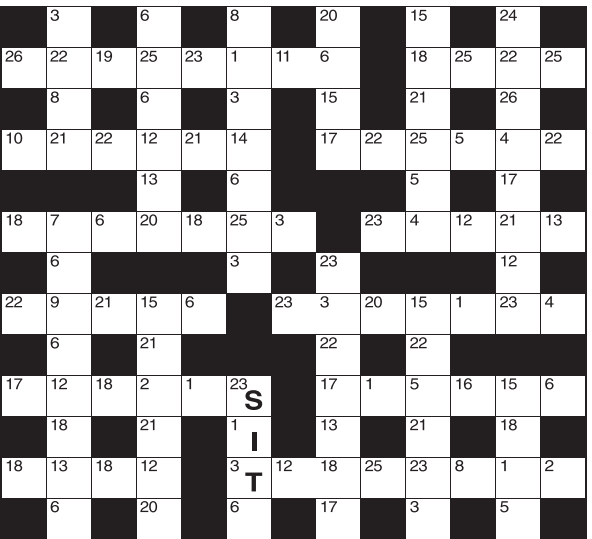


KenKen Easy No 6901



All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

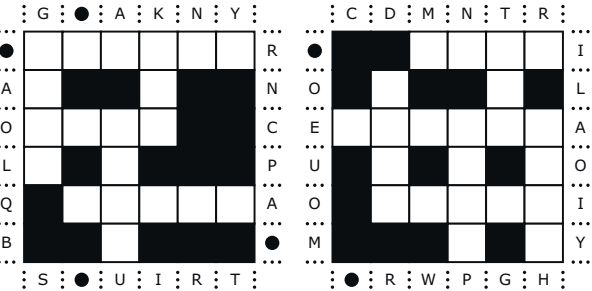
Codeword No 5909



Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Saturday's solution, right*

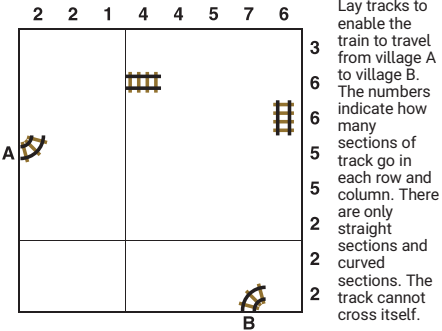
Cluelines Stuck on Codeword? To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 9031 Hard No 9032



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2934



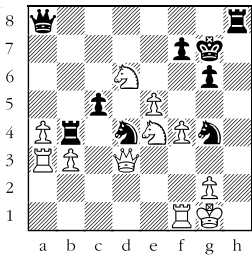
Quintagram® No 2636

Solve all five cryptic clues using each letter underneath once only

- 1 Box containing English asparagus? (5)
- 2 Seize eggs laid at the same time (6)
- 3 Disreputable professor didactic, to an extent (6)
- 4 Conservative opening religious community (7)
- 5 Mrs Simpson allowed to return message (8)

A	A	C	C	C	D	D	E
E	E	E	G	H	I	L	L
M	N	N	O	O	P	R	R
R	S	S	T	T	T	U	V

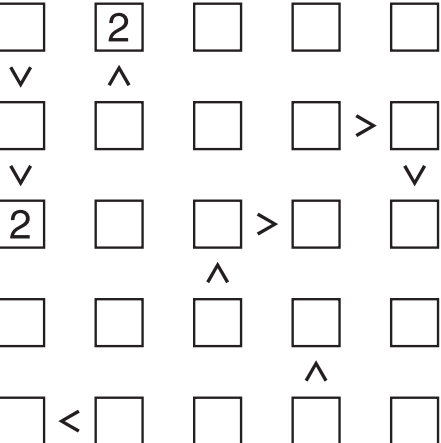
Winning Move



Black to play. This position is from Nosach-Arphith, chess.com 2026.

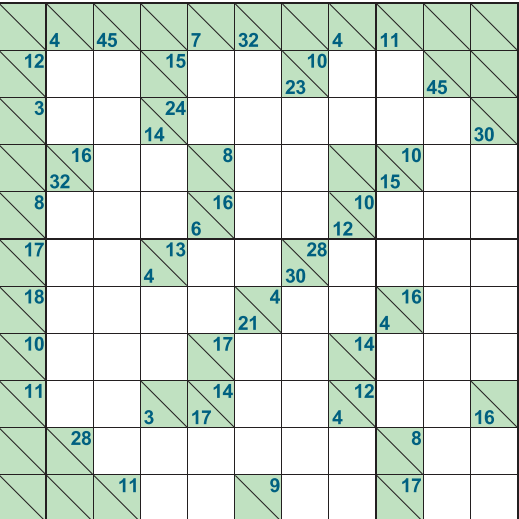
Both sides have well-placed pieces here. Although White is two pawns ahead, the deciding factor turns out to be the vulnerability of his king. How did Black now exploit this in ingenious style?

Futoshiki No 5449



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4408



Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

[illegible]

EASY	17	+ 42	x 3	- 65	HALVE IT	÷ 8	+ 47	DOUBLE IT	÷ 9	+ 73	ANSWER	
MEDIUM	12	x 12	+ 66	x 3	- 1/3 OF IT	÷ 3	DOUBLE IT	DOUBLE IT	÷ 5	+ 96	ANSWER	
HARDER	46	- 13	x 6	+ 1/2 OF IT	÷ 9	- 17	x 25	DOUBLE IT	÷ 5	TRIPLE IT	ANSWER	

16	17	11	3	14		8		
				13			15	
	4		13	32			3	10
	16				15			
6	10	6		7		17		
		17			5	8	13	
17	3	15					11	
		8		13	16		5	
11		7			3		17	

				6	
		4			2
5				3	
				8	7
6					
		2			
			4		2

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	+		+		= 16
+	■	-	■	+	
	-		×		= 6
+	■	+	■	-	
9	+		×	1	= 13
= 18		= 5		= 10	

R	U	D	A
SEANCE	SC		
A	D	B	P
FLEE	THIR		
L	R	O	R
DISAGREE			
F	C	V	
MESH	R	ESC	
	I	A	P
OBJECTOR			
A	V	H	U
ALLEG	C		
I	R	F	

SHUT DOWN ■ PLUS
Q ■ N ■ U ■ E ■ I ■ Q
UN ■ IT ■ B ■ A ■ N ■ D ■ E
A ■ U ■ Y ■ B ■ T ■ F ■ R ■ E ■ E
TUCKER ■ R ■ E ■ F ■ R ■ E ■ E
■ K ■ G ■ D ■ E ■ Z
OXYGEN ■ C ■ A ■ J ■ O ■ L ■ E
V ■ S ■ F ■ T ■ R ■
ELECTRIC ■ B ■ I ■ F ■ F
R ■ R ■ A ■ A ■ S ■ G ■ U ■
PYRITES ■ S ■ E ■ X ■ A ■ L ■ T ■
A ■ O ■ E ■ C ■ M ■
YARD ■ V ■ O ■ L ■ I ■ T ■ I ■ O ■ N ■

7	9	5	1	4	9	
7	9	8	1	4	1	8
9	8		3	2	1	7
		3	8			6
6	8	1	2	2	7	9
4	9		4	8	3	1
3	7		7	6	9	3
2	5			9	4	1
1	4	9	2		9	5
		7	1	8	2	3

A 3D visualization of a 3x3x3 Rubik's cube. The cube is shown from an isometric perspective, revealing three faces: the top face, the front face, and the right face. Each face is a 3x3 grid of squares, each containing a number from 1 to 9. The numbers are arranged in a way that suggests a specific permutation or state of the cube. The top face shows numbers like 2, 8, 5, 7, 9, 4, 1, 3, 6. The front face shows 6, 4, 1, 2, 3, 8, 5, 6, 7. The right face shows 4, 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 2, 8, 9. The bottom, back, and left faces are also visible, showing various combinations of the numbers 1-9.

387

Y	K	P	I	G
O	R	E	T	S
P	T	H	O	L
A	N	I	P	E
R	K	E	R	N

$$\begin{array}{r} 6 + 7 \times 3 \\ \times \square \times \square - \\ 5 + 8 \times 1 \\ + \square \div \square \times \\ 9 + 2 \times 4 \end{array}$$

	S	H	A	F	T
M		E			U
A	S	Y	L	U	M
N					
I					
C	R	O	A	K	Y

			6		3
	4				
		3	5	2	
6	2				8
	4				
	2	4			

1 5 3 4
 4 > 3 5 2 >
 v
 3 2 1 5
 v v v
 2 1 4 > 3
 5 > 4 > 2 1

10x	9+				24x	
5	1	2	3	6	4	
	15+				30x	
2	6	4	5	1	3	
1-			30x	2+		
3	4	6	1	5	2	
18x					1-	
6	5	3	2	4	1	
		9+	3-	2+		
1	3	5	4	2	6	
2+					2-	
4	2	1	6	3	5	

	F			T	
B	E	A	C	O	N
	N			R	
A		L	U	R	K
S	P	A		I	
K		B	A	D	E

4	7	1	2	5	6	9	3	8
3	2	8	9	7	1	5	4	6
5	9	6	4	8	3	1	7	2
2	8	7	6	4	5	3	1	9
9	6	5	3	1	7	2	8	4
1	4	3	8	9	2	6	5	7
8	5	4	1	2	9	7	6	3
6	1	9	7	3	4	8	2	5
7	3	2	5	6	8	4	9	1

**Concise
Quintagram**

1 Given
2 Middle
3 Family
4 Maiden
5 Household

7	6	4
26	17	
8	5	2
25	11	
9	3	1

**Brain
Trainer**
Easy 85
Medium 208
Harder 480

Erf (a) A liquid that solidifies when electrified (*Collins*)
Emprise (b) A dangerous undertaking (*Chambers*)
Kineme (b) A unit of non-vocal communication (*OED*)

1 The Sun 2 Coffee 3 Two
4 Horse 5 HMS Belfast
6 Lionel Richie 7 Nikita
Khrushchev 8 Carol Ann
Duffy 9 Sikhism, as in Guru
Nanak 10 *Dixon of Dock
Green* 11 Sri Lankan civil
war 12 *What the Dickens!*
13 Queen Elizabeth II
14 Prestwick 15 Trevor Baylis

MindGames

For extra
puzzles
See page 10

Word watch

David Parfitt

Erf

a A liquid that solidifies when electrified
b A wild variety of goldfish
c Flakes of dried skin

Emprise

a The daughter of an emperor
b A dangerous undertaking
c To dislodge with a lever

Kineme

a An enthusiastic filmgoer
b A unit of non-vocal communication
c A member of one's wider family

Answers on page 15

Sudoku Easy No 16,995

	5	1	6					
7		4				3	8	
2	3		5	7				
4		3			7	5		9
		6			9			
			8	5			6	4
	9		3				1	
	2			6	7			3
			7	1		5		

Difficult No 16,996

6		8				5		
5	1		4		8		7	
		9	7			2		
3			6					
	5			8	3	4		
	4	3			5		6	
		6	1			7		
				4		8	1	

Fiendish No 16,997

	8	6						
		1		6	5			
	4	9	8	7				
		7	3				1	
	2		1			6	3	
				9	4	7		
					9	2	7	5
			2		3		8	
7								

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz Olav Bjortomt

1 What is the only celestial body in our solar system that is hotter than Venus?

2 Flat white and long black are types of which hot drink?

3 How many of Henry VIII's children became queen of England?

4 The Norwegian coldblooded trotter is a native Nordic breed of what animal?

5 Imperial War Museums operates which former Royal Navy light cruiser as a museum ship on the Thames?

6 Which former Commodore member had solo hits with *All Night Long* (1983)?



and *Dancing on the Ceiling* (1986)?

7 In the late 1950s, which Soviet premier boasted that the USSR was "producing missiles like sausages"?

8 Brett Dean's new song cycle sets poems from *The World's Wife* by which former poet laureate?

9 Which religion's founder was born in 1469 in Rai Bhoi Di Talwandi (now Nankana Sahib, Pakistan)?

10 Peter Byrne spent two decades in the role of Andy Crawford in which long-running TV police drama?

11 VV Ganesananthan's 2023 coming-of-age novel *Brotherless Night* is set during which 1983-2009 war?

12 *Little Nell*, *Dotheboys Hall* and *The Artful Dodger* are tracks on which 1963 jazz album by Johnny Dankworth?

13 *Africa Goodbye* is the Colombian artist Beatriz González's 1968 portrait of which woman?

14 The 1925 Open Championship was the 24th and last Open to be staged at which Scottish golf venue?

15 Which inventor of the wind-up radio is pictured?

Answers on page 15

Sakuro No 4810

26		17
25		11

24	11	10
----	----	----

Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.com

The Times Quick Cryptic No 3370 by Pipsqueak

1		2		3			4	5		6
					7		8			
9						10				
11								12		
13		14				15				16
17				18		19			20	
21					22					
23						24				

Across

- Trouble following idiot's attack (6)
- Get what shipwrecked sea dog longs for? (4)
- Spotted African runner — adulterer they say (7)
- Brash American hiding embarrassment (5)
- Star female put down oil producer (9)
- Elderly husband avoiding embrace (3)
- Briefly express view after doctor's visit (4,2)
- Heartlessly examine very small creature (6)
- Fate of item for sale at Sotheby's (3)
- Emir's text disturbed fanatic (9)
- Funny business with the Speaker's assistant? (5)
- Men upset with girl, mischievous little thing (7)
- Furious about knight's curse (4)
- Some resist a tickle still (6)

Down

- American clubs repeatedly exploited defendant (7)
- Southern seabird's back (5)
- Fancy telling niece what CIA is after! (12)
- A bishop by himself eating this? (7)
- Fear old man is catching on (5)
- Farm animal eating hot dog (4)
- Alienation of curious people in Spielberg film (12)
- Choose one parent as model (7)
- Picture intact, I suspect (7)
- Clear line head of UK police supports (5)
- Roman attire, article acquired from the south (4)
- Popular place to rent in bay (5)

Friday's solution on page 15

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